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O F
Divinity and Morality;
Containing a
SERIES of DISCOURSES

On the principal and most important Points of
Natural and Revealed Religion.

Compiled from the Works of the most eminent
Divines of the Church of *ENGLAND*.

In FIVE VOLUMES.

V O L. I.

L O N D O N:

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P R E F A C E.

IT may not be amiss to observe, that the greatest part of this work has been some years composed, waiting for a favourable opportunity to make it public. And many judicious persons of my acquaintance are of opinion, that the present conjuncture is as apposite and promising to assure a candid reception of it, as any future period of time: When deism, popery, and immorality reign triumphant in our nation, to the shame and reproach of our laws, our government and religion. When the admonitions of the Almighty by the late gentle earthquakes, seem to have awakened some to a more serious reflection on the situation we are in by our manifold sins, and most enormous impieties: For these reasons, the present juncture of time may be no improper season, to propose to the consideration of all thinking men a fair and unpreju-

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diced enquiry, into the certainty of religious truths ; and for them to examine seriously and impartially, whether there be in reason and argument, and in the nature of things, any true and just grounds, to believe the general and most common principles of natural and revealed religion ; or not. There being some in this dissolute age, who even question, if not deny, the God that made them.

And if, upon a candid and impartial examination, it will clearly appear, that there is a reasonable foundation to believe the fundamentals of natural religion ; and that God has, by his only Son, revealed his will to men, to direct them in their duty, and how to obtain eternal life : If these things are plainly and evidently demonstrated, as it is hoped they are in the following discourses, as far as the nature of them will admit, there will be the greatest reason to expect, that men will heartily embrace all such truths, as are thus proved and confirmed, and endeavour to conduct their lives agreeably thereto.

For this is a concern of so much moment and importance, as to demand the immediate and most solemn attention of all considerate persons. Since if there be a God, who has established laws for the government of us his creatures, we may rest assured, that he



he will require an exact account of our observance of them ; because he has faithfully promised to reward with eternal happiness, those who carefully obey his will, and keep his commandments ; and to inflict everlasting punishments on all such as neglect, despise and contemn them. It is therefore presumed and hoped, that the following discourses, if perused by minds void of prejudice and propositio[n], and inclined to embrace truth, when fairly and rationally proposed, may, through God's blessing, greatly contribute to obtain such excellent ends.

It must be confessed, we abound in volumes of sermons, on the most necessary and useful subjects, which, in respect of clear and solid argument, purity of language, and strength of reasoning, perhaps cannot be excelled in any language. But a regular system of doctrinal and practical divinity, in the method of sermons, which seems most suitable for families, is not to be found (unless in discourses on the catechism) in the works of our most eminent writers. Besides, such volumes of sermons as are extant, do, for the most part contain a mixture of occasional sermons, on thanksgiving and fast days, that no way concern our times, and are therefore very improper for private families. This reflection, was

the first motive to my attempting this laborious work.

But in the course of my reading, I was agreeably surprized to find, that many learned men, had, previous to my thought, recommended the same design. And their authority, jointly with the great usefulness of such an undertaking, may have weight, and tend to recommend this work, to more universal esteem and approbation.

I beg leave therefore first to produce the sentiments of that great man lord *Verulam*, as cited by the learned bishop *Wilkins*, which ought to be considered as the testimony of two eminent persons in favour of the present design. The good bishop's words are ;
“ ‘Tis the common opinion, that our *English* sermons and treatises are most elaborate and useful. It was the judgment of
“ a very learned man, (lord *Verulam*) that
“ if the choicest and best observations,
“ which have been made dispersedly in our
“ *English* sermons (leaving out the largeness
“ of exhortations and applications) had been
“ set down in a continuance, it would be
“ the best work in divinity, that had been
“ written since the apostle's time *.’” But how

* *Wilkins's gift of preaching*, p. 108. 7th edition.
Bacon's advancement of learning, p. 116.

how vastly are the sermons of our modern divines improved both in matter and language, since the observation of these two great writers.

The ingenious Mr. *Norris* is most express in, recommending a design of this kind, which though it but lately came to my knowledge, yet with the reasons before assigned, has considerably tended to encourage the publication of this work. He observes how well furnished the age at that time was *, with religious discourses, and then adds,

" I think withal, that if there were a choice
" collection made of our *English* sermons,
" especially of the later times, it might de-
" serve to wear the *honourable chain* in our
" public libraries, as well as any the best cu-
" riosities we have there; and indeed to
" turn out a great many dull worm-eaten
" authors, which fill our stalls, as many
" persons do the world, idly and insignifi-
" cantly, and are not worth the room they
" take up. And I further think, that if
" the selectest parts of these our modern
" sermons, were ranged under certain heads,
" and judiciously sorted and disposed in or-
" der, out of these materials might be framed
" far the best body of divinity, both for the
" rational and for the persuasive part that is

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“ in the world. And it is great pity, but
 “ that *some would* undertake the performance.
 “ It would, I am persuaded, be a work of
 “ excellent use, as well as curiosity †.”

In a little tract, which I am well assured was wrote by the late learned Dr. *Waterland*; he observes of our *English* sermons, “ That they are the easiest, plainest, and most entertaining of any books of divinity; and contain as much and as good divinity, as any other discourses whatever; and might be digested into a better body of divinity, than any that is extant *.” Again,

It was the judgment of the great and excellent archbishop *Tilloisan*, that a new book of *Homilies*, or *Sermons*, on the doctrinal and practical parts of the christian religion, explaining what was necessary to be believed and practised, would be of great use to the clergy in particular, and to the whole nation in general. With this view, in the year 1693, he consulted the bishops *Patrick*, *Stillingfleet*, *Burnet*, and others, how to accomplish a design of this nature. He proposed to take a large part of the work to himself. Bishops *Patrick* and *Burnet* were willing to engage therein, and he knew several others, that had

† Preface to 2d volume of sermons.

* Advice to a student, p. 13.

had entirely considered the scheme, who were both ready and able to execute such parts as should be assigned them. The learned *Stillingfleet* promised that he would read, remark, and correct the several compositions with the utmost care and exactness. Bishop *Burnet* prepared for that purpose five discourses; these were critically corrected by *Stillingfleet*, and which so well pleased the archbishop, that he desired him to take to his share, the whole ten commandments. But this, with many other good designs, could not then be effected, but were, says *Burnet*, reserved to a better opportunity †.

The intention of these learned and pious prelates evidently was, to have the principles of religion, clearly and judiciously explained, and the practice of it enforced by the most convincing arguments. And that it might have the greater weight and influence, it was to have been performed by persons of distinguished abilities, and of high stations in the church. And if such a design was then esteemed so useful and expedient, it may be presumed this undertaking, which is of a similar nature, will be deemed equally advantageous to religion. For tho' all these discourses were not composed by the great men who intended to have engaged in that work, yet many of them were; and the rest

† Preface to essay for a new book of homilies.

rest are selected, but abridged from such authors, as were most conspicuous for learning and piety. So that it may be truly said, this undertaking is perfectly agreeable to what was then proposed.

The observation of Bishop *Burnet*, in his advice to his clergy, deserves to be considered on the present occasion. “ The nation
“ has got into so good a taste of sermons,
“ from the vast number of those excellent
“ ones, that are in print, that a mean com-
“ position will be very ill heard ; and there-
“ fore it is an unseasonable piece of vanity,
“ for any to offer their own crudities, till
“ they have well digested and ripened them.
“ I wish the majesty of the pulpit were more
“ looked to ; and that no sermons were of-
“ fered from thence, but such as should
“ make the hearers both the better and wiser,
“ the more knowing, and the more serious.
“ And therefore, to all who are not masters
“ the body of divinity, and of the scrip-
“ tures, I should much rather recommend
“ the using other men’s sermons, than the
“ making any of their own, till they are
“ able to go without such crutches, and to
“ work without patterns † .” This para-
graph is produced in deference to the judg-
ment of such of my friends, as seem to think
that this work will be of great service to
all

† *Pastoral care*, p. 226, 227.

all such of the inferior clergy, whose income being small, have scarce a sufficiency to maintain their families, much less to purchase books ; and yet to have them supplied with a proper collection of sermons, is, in the opinion of Bishop *Burnet*, very proper and even necessary.

Should there be any weight in this conjecture, and that these five volumes meet with approbation and suitable encouragement, it is intended to publish two more volumes, to be had either with, or exclusive of these ; one volume to contain discourses on the chief festival and fast days, with lectures on the church catechism ; the other on the most essential points in difference between Protestants and Papists : For as the learned Bishop *Sprat* justly remarks : “ If a judicious sum, and full epitome, were collected from the controversies between us and the church of *Rome*, it would be as useful a body of controversy, on those questions, as any yet extant †.” By means of these supplemental volumes the whole will be a concise, and yet comprehensive system of divinity and morality, or collection of christian truths, regularly digested in the method of sermons, not before attempted by any person ; and considering the variety of subjects it contains, the purchase can-

† Discourse to his clergy 1695. p. 28.

cannot but be thought very easy, and which was contrived so on purpose to render the knowledge of christianity more universal and extensive.

But as many divines have treated on one and the same subject and text, each of whose discourses could not be used, the compiler has made choice of such, as seemed to him, the most solid, clear, and pertinent; which he hopes will meet with the approbation of others. Indeed, as to some, there was no small difficulty, which to determine in favour of, they were so well composed. Where the words or expressions of any author seemed obsolete, or not so intelligible, liberty has been taken to exchange such passages, for others more plain and clear, but so as not to alter the true sense and meaning of each respective author, which is preserved throughout. And as many of the original discourses were longer than others, and are consequently more abridged, it was thought expedient sometimes to change the text, and to adapt one more suitable to such parts of the discourse as is retained in this work. And to some there is a practical conclusion added, taken from a different author, in order to enforce, and render the discourse more affecting.

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Perhaps some persons, thro' inexperience in things of this nature, will imagine, that this was a most easy undertaking; but I beg leave to assure all such, that it has required much time, labour and pains: for great numbers of volumes were to be perused, and digested in the mind, besides those made use of, in order to find out such subjects and discourses properly adapted thereto, as seemed most useful and fit to appear in this system.

As to the prayers annexed to each volume, they are for the most part compiled from our best devotional writers, altered and varied in such particulars, as might render the composition the more exact and acceptable. And would masters and heads of families have one of these discourses read to their children and servants, the evening of every sabbath, and restore the use of family devotion; such a reformation, by God's blessing, may be attended with the best consequences, and we might, in time, hope to have revived, at least the appearance of religion, in these kingdoms.

It may be proper to take notice of one objection, in order to remove it, that will possibly be suggested, against this undertaking, namely, that it is an invasion of some booksellers copies. But as this can only come from

from the trade, I beg leave to ask them, whether to abridge about three or four sermons of an octavo volume, declaring it to be so, can be deemed what they understand by the word piracy. The sermons at *Boyle's* lectures, the *London* cases, the philosophical transactions ; have all been abridged, besides many other works ; and was *piracy* ever imputed to the ingenious abridgers, who were men of character and reputation ? Or have *Harris's* and *Astley's* collection of voyages been the less esteemed, for being collected and abridged from other works, tho' volumes have been inserted with little alteration ? There is no occasion to enumerate other instances, except just to mention, that the late ingenious Mr. *Millar*, author of the Gardener's Dictionary, has collected the greatest part of his work from other persons. Nay, the great names whom I have produced, in favour of the design, would not have recommended a thing of this nature, could they have surmised any such objection.

I hope enough is hinted to secure this undertaking from any such ill natured, unkind reflections, as may do it prejudice, under a notion of its being injurious to the authors from whence any discourses, tho' abridged, are taken ; when in fact, it has a tendency to recommend many of their works, to the less stu-

studious part of mankind, who otherwise perhaps might never have heard of them.

The author begs leave to conclude, with assuring the reader, that no industry or labour has been neglected, that could in any degree contribute to make this an useful, if not a complete work of its kind. And if, in any respect, it tends to promote the right knowledge, and sincere practice of true religion, to stem the torrent of infidelity, vice, and immorality; to reform the manners and amend the lives of men; his chief and great end will be obtained. And he humbly hopes, that no one who with seriousness and judgment considers of what great service this work may be to mankind, will make use of any mean arts and unchristian methods, to frustrate and render abortive so commendable an attempt; nor yet by meer cavil strive to weaken and elude his general good intention, in favour of natural and revealed religion. But let a christian temper, and meekness of spirit once again prevail, and bear sway, more especially in disputes of a religious concern; and in all our disputes after knowledge, let us embrace truth when discovered, and make it the ultimate end of our enquiries, and tho' we may not be all of one mind, yet let brotherly love and charity ever encrease, and influence our conduct to each other,

other, which will always redound to God's glory, the honour of his holy religion, and be the best evidence that all men can give of their being the true and sincere disciples of our blessed Lord.

... our blessed Lord.
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DISCOURSE I. Tillotson.

The being of God demonstrated

Gen. i. 1.

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

WE live in so profane and sceptical an age, as to call in question the most universally received principles both of reason and religion. The bold cavils of perverse and unreasonable men are such, as to oblige us to prove and defend those principles, which can hardly be made plainer than they are of themselves; even, *that there is a God, by whom all things were made.* I shall therefore endeavour to shew from the reason of things the great folly of atheism. Now the atheists, without the belief of a God, can give no tolerable account of the world's existence. The vast frame of the universe, and those innumerable multitudes of creatures in it, we who believe a God, attribute to him, as the author of them. To suppose a being of infinite goodness, wisdom, and power, the efficient cause of the world's creation, is in itself very probable and likely. For, what is more likely to make this immense world, to stretch forth the heavens, and lay the foundation of the earth, than infinite power? What is more likely to communicate being, and so many degrees of happiness, to such variety of creatures, than infinite goodness? what is more likely to continue this beautiful fabric of the universe, and all the creatures in it, so perfect in their kind, and each part so exactly fitted to the whole, than infinite counsel and wisdom? This is no unreasonable

account of the origin of things. But what says the atheist as to the world's existence? why, either that the matter and frame of the world are eternal, without any first cause of their being, which was the opinion of Aristotle, who supposed its eternity, and denied it to be from God; or, that the matter of the world being eternal of itself, the original of this vast and beautiful frame, is ascribed to chance, and a causal concourse of the parts of matter; this was the opinion of Epicurus. But neither of these gives any tolerable account of the world's existence; as shall be proved.

That something exists of itself is evident to our sight, and what we see must either have some first cause of its being, or have been from all eternity. So that the dispute between us and the followers of Aristotle, is, which opinion seems most credible, either that the world was not made, but that from all eternity, there have been a succession of men and other creatures, without any first cause of their being; or, that there was from all eternity, such a being as we conceive God to be, infinite in power, goodness, and wisdom, which made us and all other things? The first of these opinions I will prove to be incredible in itself; and that the latter has all the credibility and evidence, which the nature of the thing will admit, sufficient to convince any impartial, considerate man. And that the truth may sooner be discovered, it will be necessary to consider the arguments and difficulties on each side. And I will first shew, that we have as fair proof for a God, as the nature of the thing is capable of, and that there is none against it. And, secondly, that the atheist is incumbered with the greatest difficulties.

Whether the world had a beginning, or was from eternity, is a question, that concerns an ancient matter of fact, and can only be decided by testimony, and

and the probabilities of reason; both which concur to prove, that the world was created, and had a beginning. In the present debate, we can only have recourse to human testimonies, and both universal tradition, and written history, are clearly on our side.

There is an universal tradition of the world's beginning, and that it was made by God*. "The most ancient nations, the Egyptians and Phænicians, did agree with the Grecians, that the world did begin and should have an end; and that God the maker and governor of it, is present in all its parts." The most ancient philosophers, *Thales*, *Anaxagoras*, and *Pythagoras*, did also consent to this tradition. *Tully* says †, that *Thales* was the first who asserted that water was the beginning of all things, and that God was that mind, (or intelligent principle) which fashioned all things out of water.

The *Brahmans*, *Indian* philosophers, did also agree that the world was made of water; which exactly corresponds with *Moses*'s account of the creation, that the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And which St. Peter thus expresses, that by the word of God, the heavens and the earth (the Hebrews call the world so) were of old constituted, or made of water, (not standing out of the water, as our translation renders it) 2 Pet. 3. 5. Nay, even *Aristotle* himself says ‡, the Gods were anciently represented by the heathens, as swearing by the lake *Styx*, because water was supposed the principle of all things. And it was an ancient general tradition among all men, that all things are of God, and were made by him. *Maximus Tyrius* also observes, that however men differ in other things **, yet they

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* *Grot. verit. Ch. relig. l. 1.* † *De nat. Deor. l. 1.*

‡ *De Mundo, c. 6.* Strabo *Geog. l. 15*

‡ *Metaph. l. 1. c. 3.*

** *Dissert. 1.*

" all agree in this law, (or principle) that there is
" one God, king and father of all things."

The history of *Moses*, with which no book can compare as to its antiquity, is another credible testimony of the world's beginning. To allow him the credit only of an ordinary (not divine) historian, will be sufficient for my present purpose; and *Josephus* assures us, that the antiquity of his writings was never questioned. *Moses* gives us a particular account of the world's beginning and its creation by God, as also of the flood, and which agrees with the most ancient heathen writers, whether poets or historians. The relation given of ancient times by the *Egyptians* and *Ghaldeans*, which some pretend to be so vastly different from the scripture, may be easily reconciled with it, if we admit what *Diodorus Siculus* and *Plutarch*, two credible persons, and diligent searchers into ancient books, do expressly assure us; " that both these nations did anciently reckon months for years." Nor is it difficult to reconcile the *Chinese* account with the *Septuagint*. So that universal tradition, and the most ancient history are clearly on our side, than which we could not desire a more convincing argument. For if the world and mankind had a beginning, it is reasonable to expect there should be an universal tradition of the fact, because of transmitting it to posterity; and that so remarkable an event should be recorded in the most ancient historians: Both which have accordingly happened. But if the world was eternal, and had no beginning, such tradition or history was needless. Thus have I proved by testimony, and even *Aristotle* himself allows, that there was an ancient tradition of the world's beginning; for he expressly says *, " that all the philosophers before him, did hold, " that the world was made." I will next consider the probabilities of reason for it.

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* *De Cœlo, l. i. c. 10.*

Lucretius, a famed Epicurean, urgeth the want of history or tradition, more ancient than the time commonly received of the world's beginning, as a strong presumption, that the world did begin. " If the world had no beginning, says he, how came the ancient Greek poets, to mention nothing higher than the *Theban* war, and the destruction of *Troy?*" Were there from all eternity, no memorable actions done till then; or could be recorded? had men been from all eternity, would they not sooner have discovered the art of writing? the atheist will pretend perhaps, that the famous actions of former times were recorded, and lost by universal deluges, which swept all away except a few persons left to begin the world again. But these universal inundations, must be either *natural*, or *supernatural*. If the latter, as it is most reasonable to suppose, then we may easily conceive, why a few of mankind only should escape, namely, because it was the pleasure of that supreme being, who is supposed supernaturally to order all these things; which is to admit, *that there is a God*. But if deluges, as the atheist pretends, are natural, then there is nothing to restrain them, from totally destroying the whole world; which had it been from eternity, would, in all probability, have long since been destroyed.

The original of *learning*, of arts and sciences, in several parts of the world, is another probable argument of its beginning. The beginning of learning, and the most useful arts in several nations, are well known; and where these have prevailed, the tradition of the world's beginning, hath always been asserted, with the greatest certainty. Besides, its more than probable, that in an infinite duration, this frame of things would long since have been dissolved, had there been no superior being, no wise intelligent principle, to repair, govern, and prevent those innumerable disorders, which in so long a space must

probably have happened. This argument is used by *Lucretius*, as a convincing proof, that the world was not eternal; nay, *Aristotle* admits, that if the frame of the world is liable to dissolution, it must necessarily have had a beginning. These are some of the probabilities on our side, which taken together carry conviction with them, especially, as the atheist can bring no positive proof against it.

I now proceed to shew, that the most pressing difficulties are on the atheists side. Those who deny a God, and suppose the world eternal, have only two things to object against us; I mean, the difficulties there are in the *notion of a God*, and in *making the world of nothing*. To the first, I answer, that we attribute nothing to God, that hath any repugnancy or contradiction to God. Power, wisdom, goodness, justice, and truth, are not contrary to our reason, because these in some degree are in ourselves, and may be in the highest degree in another. The eternity and immensity of God, and his being of himself, are perfections that all must grant to be somewhere; and it is most rational for us to ascribe these to God, whom we suppose a being of all perfection, than to any thing else. Whatever difficulty there may be in conceiving God to be a spirit, yet the atheist must allow there is a *Being* or *Principle*, really distinct from matter; or else shew how meer matter, that moves necessarily, and is void of sense, and understanding, can produce any thing that has sense, understanding and liberty. As to the *making the world of nothing*, I shall only observe, that tho' it signifies an inconceivable excess of power, yet it implies no contradiction; and it is equally easy to conceive, that something should be caused to be, that was not, as that any thing should be of itself, which yet must be granted on both sides, and therefore this difficulty ought not to be objected by either. But then there are two great and real diffi-

difficulties on the atheist's side. First, that men have generally believed the world had a beginning, and was made by God; which is a strong evidence, that this account of the world's existence is natural and easy to be conceived by human understandings. Secondly, to assert mankind to have been of itself, without a cause, is a plain contradiction, because we see every man to be from another. To assert that man hath no cause of his being, is as absurd in an infinite succession of men, as in any finite number of generations; an infinite succession of men, without an original, or first cause, being utterly inconceivable. Thus have I proved, as fully as the nature of the argument will admit, that the scripture account of the world's existence is most credible, and agreeable to reason; and that what is offered by the atheist, is altogether incredible.

The next point is to consider what the *Epicurean* atheists assert, concerning the world's existence. They suppose the *matter* of this world to be eternally of itself, and that the infinite little parts of this matter, which they call *atoms*, being always in motion, after infinite struggles without the counsel, design or contrivance of any wise intelligent being, did at last, by a happy chance, fix and settle themselves in this beautiful and regular frame, that the world now appears in; and that the earth at first produced men and every living creature, as it now does plants and vegetables. But how unreasonable is it, to impute an effect to chance, that carries with it all the arguments and characters of wisdom and contrivance? was ever any considerable work containing great variety, a regular and orderly disposition of parts, done by chance? will chance fit means to ends, in millions of instances, and not fail in any one? Is it possible for a man by shaking a number of letters in a bag, and then throwing them on the ground, to make a good discourse on any subject?

and yet may not a book be as easily made by chance, as this great volume of the world? or, can a man by carelessly sprinkling colours on a canvas, make the exact picture of a man? and is a man easier made by chance, than his picture? how long might twenty thousand blind men sent from distant parts of *England*, wander up and down, before they would all meet in one place, and fall into rank and file, after the exact manner of an army? and yet this is more easy to be imagined, than that the innumerable blind parts of matter, should marshal themselves into a world? Whoever views any spacious fabric, may as well maintain, that it never was contrived and built by any man, but that the materials thereof, happily met together, and fortunately ranged themselves in that delicate, close, compacted order, in which they now appear, as to affirm, that the world was made by chance, or that the first men grew out of the earth, as plants and herbs do. Can any thing be more ridiculous and contrary to reason, than to countenance such monstrous notions? and yet these are the persons who would be thought men of reason, the great wits of the world, who hate to be imposed upon, and must have convincing evidence for every thing, and admit of nothing without clear demonstration. I will now proceed to prove, that atheism is an opinion, the most unreasonable, absurd, and uncomfortable.

Atheism is unreasonable, because it gives no probable account, of the universal consent of mankind, *that there is a God*. That men did in all ages generally believe a God, the records of former times do abundantly testify. But how comes this persuasion, so universally to have prevailed, even among the most barbarous nations, if there be not a God? why are we so perpetually haunted with the apprehensions and fears of a deity, which attends us, wherever we go? was it not natural to the mind of man, how comes

comes it to be so universal, that no considerable number of men are free from it? the reason of such universal consent in all places and ages of the world, among all sorts of persons, can no way be accounted for, unless we suppose the notion of a Deity, is by nature imprest on the minds and understandings of men, which by the free use and exercise of itself, will find out God. And it is most reasonable to think, that God should set this mark of himself, on all his rational creatures, that they might know and acknowledge the *author* of their Beings. This seems to be a credible and satisfactory account of such an universal consent; but the atheist resolves all this into nothing, but fear, tradition, and state policy.

That the fear of a Deity is universal, both sides agree. But is it not more probable, that the existence of a God should cause this fear, than that fear should be the cause of mens believing there is a God? if there be a God, that hath impressed this image of himself in the minds of men, we have great reason to fear him; but if there is no God, how can fear create an universal assurance in men, that there is one? the fear of a Deity seems founded in nature, and which would never have been planted in the nature of a man, had there not been a God.

As to tradition, the atheist can give no account from whence it came. But if this tradition be older than any history, it is most likely to have been born in the mind of man. Lastly, that the notion of a God, should arise from state policy, invented to keep people in awe, is meer conjecture without any proof or evidence. But as this supposition admits, that the belief of a God, conduces to the well governing the world, and is beneficial to mankind; the atheist must then confess, that it is pity but it should be true, as being for the common interest of all men. And if politicians do find that the belief of a God is advantageous to government it, is more

likely that the minds of men were prepossessed with this notion, than that they artfully planted it there.

Atheism is also absurd, in that it requires more evidence for things, than they are capable of. *Aristotle* well observed, that it was unreasonable to expect the same kind of proof and evidence, for one thing, that we have for another. *Mathematical* questions are capable of the clearest and strictest demonstrations: But conclusions in *natural philosophy*, are proved by an induction of experiments; things of a *moral* nature, by *moral* arguments; and matters of *fact* by credible *testimony*. And tho' these are not capable of a *mathematical* demonstration, yet we may be assured of the truth of them, when they are proved by the best arguments the thing will admit. For instance, no man can demonstrate that there is such an island as *Jamaica*, yet on the testimony of credible persons, who more doubts the truth of it, than of the clearest mathematical demonstration? Thus, tho' the being of God cannot be mathematically proved, because supposing God to be a spirit, he cannot be the object of corporeal sense; but yet we have as great assurance that there is a God, as the nature of the thing will permit, or we could reasonably expect. For supposing that there is a being, or infinite spirit, of all possible perfection, how should we be assured of it? it must either be by the internal impression of a God on our minds, or by such external visible effects, as our reason must attribute to some cause; and which we can impute to no other cause but such a being as we conceive God to be; namely, one that is infinitely good, wise, and powerful. Lastly,

Atheism is an opinion the most uncomfortable, it being against the present interest and happiness of mankind to have no God. Certain it is, that man of himself is insufficient for his own happiness. He is liable to many evils and miseries, he can neither pre-

prevent or redress. He is full of wants, he cannot supply: encompassed with infirmities he cannot remove; obnoxious to many dangers he cannot escape. *Man*, without the protection and conduct of a superior being, is secure of nothing he enjoys, and uncertain of every thing he hopes for. He is apt to grieve for what he cannot help, and eager to desire what he is unlikely to obtain. His hopes and expectations exceed his enjoyments, and his fears are more terrible, than the evils he dreads. He is every moment liable to many inconveniences, and insecure of life itself. And besides all these, he naturally dreads a superior being, who can defeat all his designs, blast all his hopes, and make him miserable beyond all his fears. He has frequent doubts concerning another life, and fearful apprehensions of an invisible judge; he is therefore full of anxiety about a future state, and grows weary of himself, so that he must naturally seek for happiness elsewhere. But if there is no superior being, on whom he may repose his confidence, and obtain a quiet mind; if he has no comfortable expectations of another life, to sustain him under the calamitous evils of this world, he is certainly of *all creatures the most miserable*. There are none of us, but may happen to fall into such circumstances of danger, want, pain, or other calamity, as to have no hopes of relief or comfort but from God; none to have recourse to, but him. And in such cases what should we do was it not for God? in extremity, all men fly to God? even the atheist would then, gladly have such a friend.

Can it then be wise or reasonable, to aim at banishing the belief of a God out of the world? since nothing can more effectually undermine the only foundation of our happiness. For was there no God, man would be more wretched than the creatures below him; who are only sensible of present pain, but have no apprehension of distant evils. If the providence

of God is rejected, what security have we against those innumerable dangers and misfortunes, to which human nature is continually exposed? But if we believe there is a God who takes care of us, if we please him; this must be a mighty comfort to us, under the present sense of afflictions, or the apprehension of such as are more distant. For God will either by his providence prevent the evils we fear, if proper for us; or strengthen and support us under them; or make them the occasion of greater good, by turning them to our advantage in this world or the next. All these considerations must afford us great comfort; and yet we should be deprived of this pleasing satisfaction, was there no God; the belief of which is so necessary to the happiness of our lives, that a wise man would be heartily troubled to part with so delightful a thought, tho' it was meer delusion, which affords such unspeakable satisfaction to his mind.

Did men duly consider the true notion of a God, he would appear to be a *Being* so amiable, so full of goodness, and all possible perfections, that none, no not the atheist himself, could refrain from wishing there was *one*. For who would not earnestly desire, that there should be such a *Being* as can take particular care of us; as loves us, and delights to do us good; who knows all our wants, is both able and willing to relieve us in affliction, to preserve us in imminent dangers, to assist us against our worst enemies, and to comfort us, under the severest sufferings? Is it not our interest to have such a governor of the world as designs our happiness, governs us for our advantage, requires nothing but what is for our good, and will infinitely reward us, for doing what is best for ourselves? who is ever ready to be reconciled to us, when we have offended him; not taking advantage of every failing, but willing to pardon our greatest sins, on our true repentance and amendment.

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For if God is at all, we have reason to believe him to be such a being. Why then should any man be troubled that there is a God? or, how could such a governor be wanting in the world, that is so great a comfort and security to mankind? surely, was a wise man left to wish himself the greatest good he could devise, it would certainly be, *that there is such a being as God*. Nor would he chuse any other benefactor, friend, or protector, for himself, or governor for the world, than infinite power, conducted and managed by infinite wisdom, goodness and justice, which is the true notion of a God.

If then we consult our reason, we must believe there is a God; if our interest, we cannot but heartily wish there may be such a *Being*. Every thing within and without us, gives notice of him. On our hearts his name is written, and in every creature there are some prints and footsteps of him. Every moment we feel our dependance on him, and find by daily experience, that we cannot be happy without him. Indeed if a wicked man resolves to continue such, it is not his interest, that there should be a God; but then it is no man's interest to be wicked. It is for the general good of society, for all to be true and just, it conduces to mens health to be temperate, and the same as to all other virtues. But the mystery of atheism is, that men are wedded to their lusts, and resolve to live wickedly, so that their interest is, to wish there was no God, and to believe it if they can. Good and virtuous men do easily believe a God; it is therefore much to be feared, that nothing but mens lusts, and vicious inclinations do bias their minds in favour of atheism. But our belief or disbelief of a thing, does not alter the nature of it. We cannot fancy things into being, nor vanish them into nothing, by the stubborn confidence of our imaginations. So that if there be a God, a man by an obstinate disbelief of him

him, cannot make him cease to be, no more than he can put out the sun by shutting his eyes. We cannot make things true or false, their truth and existence are already fixed. The principles of religion are already true or false. There is a God, or there is not ; our souls are immortal, or they are not. One of these is certain, and not now to be altered. And thus have I after a plain and clear manner, demonstrated the folly and ignorance of atheism, in denying the existence of a God. And since by our enquiry, we find that there really is a God, as we certainly must, let us be careful to worship, serve, and glorify him, as God.

DISCOURSE II. Atterbury.

The nature and necessity of faith in God.

Heb. xi. 6.

Without faith, it is impossible to please him, for he that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them, that diligently seek him.

FAITH in general is an assent of the mind to some proposition, upon the authority of another person, who affirms the truth of it. There are three sorts of evidence, by which we come to the knowledge of things ; sense, faith, and reason. By our senses we converse with external objects, and from thence frame our notions and ideas of things ; and what we approve of by the evidence of our senses, affords us the greatest certainty. Thus is the Christian religion built upon those facts, that the apostle had

had seen and heard, and which he declared to his hearers. Next to the evidence of sense is that which we conceive from the report of honest and faithful men, such as can have no interest, nor any reason to impose upon us; and our assent in such cases, is what we call faith. The other means of knowledge, is by the exercise of our reason, but this, from the blindness of our discerning faculties, and our ignorance in applying it, is the most of any liable to error and mistake. This being premised in general, we shall better understand the nature of faith in God, which may be taken either in the assent of the mind to this truth, that there is a God; or else for the doctrine to be believed, concerning the godhead; in this last sense, I shall now consider it, having already proved there is a God.

Faith in God, implies, first, a competent knowledge of the articles of our faith, and the reasons for our believing them; for a blind assent to any thing, without reason, is credulity, but not faith. Faith is built upon reason, therefore faith and knowledge in scripture, frequently signify the same thing. St. Paul describes true believers by this character, that *they believe and know the truth.* 1 Tim. 4. 3. So that to the obtaining of a true faith in God, we must endeavour to learn what discoveries God hath made of his nature and being, either by the light of nature, the deductions of reason, and the testimony of the holy scriptures. And when we have found this, we must give our ready and sincere assent thereto; we must rivet and fix the persuasion of God's being, and a true notion of the nature of God's attributes and perfections, so firmly in our minds, as never to doubt of, or call in question this article of our faith, or to say in our hearts, *there is no God.*

But what perfects the act of believing, is a suitable practice of repentance and obedience. We must so believe there is a God, and the truth of his revealed

revealed will, as to yield obedience to his laws; and where our obedience is defective, we must endeavour to divert his anger by speedy and sincere repentance. Without this, our belief in God cannot be called faith; for some sort of infidelity is at the bottom of every sin; and in every wilful transgression of God's law, our assent to or persuasion of his being, must be either very weak or imperfect, or really wanting in us, at the time that we do amiss. For if we sincerely assent to the belief of a God, this will derive an effectual influence, upon our wills, and their powers of acting. To believe therefore in God, in its utmost latitude, imports, that we rightly understand what the scriptures have revealed concerning him; that we firmly assent to what we know and understand, and to conduct our lives according to this belief; which leads me to shew, what those propositions are, which we must believe and assent to, concerning God. And,

I. We must believe that there is such a being as God, the first cause and beginning of all things, who contains in himself the most excellent perfections; and this may be clearly proved from the works of God, those effects of his power that appear in the world, and can proceed from no other cause, but an infinite mind; a being of infinite perfections, who displays the rays of his goodness upon all his creatures. Whoever considers the wonderful order and beauty of the world, the design and subserviency in every part to produce the good of the whole, the usefulness and harmony which is apparently manifest in the universe, must needs conclude, that it is the admirable contrivance of some infinite wise being. Nor is there any part of the creation so mean, as that the art of man can equal it; which plainly proves, how short art falls of nature, and that the works of God as much transcend our works, as his thoughts do our thoughts. For all the wit and art

in the world cannot build that nest, which *every* poor bird makes, nor yet set it in order, if taken to pieces; or, who is there can weave such a web, as every spider makes, without any thought or foresight? from whence it is evident, that these irrational creatures are directed by a superior hand and mind, who having made this world, governs it with infinite wisdom and conduct, and is that very being which we call God.

2. We must believe that there is but *one* God, for tho' the scriptures teach us, that there are Lords many, and Gods many, yet this must be understood, in a limited and inferior sense; as is evident by this *one* argument, that since our natural notion of a God is, that he is a being of all possible perfection, there can be but *one* who is infinitely perfect; for if all perfection centers in one being, there can be no perfection derived to any other, but what came, and flows from him, as its source and original. And yet we must not so conceive God to be one, as to exclude a trinity of persons; which tho' not discoverable by the light of nature, is clearly taught us in the holy scripture, and absolutely necessary to be believed, in order to our understanding the oeconomy of man's salvation, and the wonderful work of our redemption. We do not indeed find it in express words in the holy bible that there is one God, and three persons in the Godhead; but it is plainly affirmed that there is a father, a son, and an holy ghost; that the father is God, the son is God, and the holy ghost is God; and yet there can be but one God. But the manner how these three are one, or this one three, is not explained to us in the holy writ; either because it was not necessary for us to know it, or that we could not comprehend it. However, since the holy scripture has informed us that the divine nature is so, we ought in reason to acquiesce in those discoveries, which God has been pleased to make of himself, without prying too.

too curiously into what infinite wisdom has concealed from us. For, since we know so little of our own natures, how can we imagine, that our finite understandings, should be able to comprehend an infinite being; nay, it is so agreeable to reason, that the nature of God should be incomprehensible, that no wise man would own such a God, as could be comprehended. It will therefore be a much more useful enquiry to consider, what those particular excellencies of the divine nature are, which God has discovered to us, in the holy scriptures.

And if we search the scriptures, and would have right notions of God, we must believe, first, that he is a spirit, which is the best and highest name we can describe God by; but when we say God is a spirit, we do not mean, that he is such a being as angels, and the souls of men are, but that his spiritual nature, is as vastly transcending the excellency of angelic natures and created spirits, as they excel the corporeal world. By saying God is a spirit, we mean, that he is a being who has no extension of parts, no corporeal bulk, no bodily members; but that he is such an intelligent being as is endowed with infinite power, wisdom and activity; a being that infinitely excels all other spiritual beings. This is the best notion we can form of God as a spirit, tho' abundantly short and unworthy of the excellencies and perfections of the divine nature. — 2. We must believe that God is *eternal*; a being that never had any beginning, nor can possibly have any end. Time is only the property of created beings, but God is from *everlasting to everlasting*; his throne is from *generation to generation*; and at his right hand are pleasures for evermore. Lam. 5. 19. Psal. 16.

11. — 3. We must believe that God is *immutable*; he is not subject to change, either in respect of his essence, his knowledge, duration, or the determination of his will; for in him is no variableness,

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nor shadow of turning. Jam. 1. 17. *I am the Lord, I change not,* Mal. 3. 6. And therefore when God is said in scripture, to repent of some good promise, or of some work he has wrought, or of some threatening he has made, we must understand this to be, not of any real change in himself, but that he only speaks after the manner of men, in condescension to our low capacities, discovering his mind to us, as we do to one another. For God ever was and will be an utter enemy to sin, and a terror to all incorrigible sinners; he will ever be the same merciful father to such as return to him by repentance; the same faithful friend to good and virtuous men; the same protector of all who trust and rely upon him; and the same rewarder of all, who obey his laws and keep his commandments. —— 4. We must believe God to be *omnipotent*; that he is able to do all things which do not imply a contradiction. All power is derived from him, for power supreme belongs only to God, who is able to do exceedingly above all that we can ask or think; so that we ought to submit to his will, and obey his word. —— 5. We must believe God to be *omnipotent*, not only with respect to his power and influence, but his real presence. He rules and governs all things by his providence, is present in all places, but in a more peculiar manner delights to dwell, in the humble and contrite heart, in holy and religious assemblies. His essence is in every place, and commensurate with all beings, because, place itself is in God, and all other things exist from, by, and in him. —— 6. We must believe God to be *omniscient*; that his knowledge extends to all times, and all things, there being no creature that is not manifest in his sight, but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him, with whom we have to do. Heb. 4. 13. He knows every particular action and thought of the heart of man, even those which are not yet conceived in his mind. —— 7. We must be-

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lieve God to be infinitely *wise*; that he proposes the most excellent ends, and effects them by the most proper means; he is therefore truly styled the *only wise God*, a being infinitely perfect.—8. We must believe God to be *true*, both as truth signifies veracity in his word, and faithfulness to his promise; the one is the foundation of our faith, the other of our hope and trust in God.—9. We must believe God to be a being the most *pure* and *holy*; he cannot but hate sin, and love virtue, the one being agreeable to his nature, the other contrary to it.—10. We must believe God to be perfectly just, in rendering to every one according to their deserts, by rewarding the good, and punishing the wicked; for either in this world or the next, the judge of all the earth will do right; his ways being just and equal, tho' at present they are past finding out. Lastly, we must believe God to be infinitely *good*; both as it implies all other perfections, and as it signifies love, kindness, and beneficence to all his creatures; he being ever ready to give them all the good things their natures are capable of receiving, and to forgive them all their sins, if they return to him, by a sincere and unfeigned repentance.

These are the chief of those divine perfections, which God has been pleased to reveal to us; and tho' there may be many other excellencies hid from us, yet as he has not discovered them to us, we ought not curiously to search into what he is pleased to conceal from us. That which best becomes us, is to meditate on those perfections of God, which are plainly laid down in the holy scriptures, to transcribe them by imitation, not excluding any of them; but to consider them all in conjunction with each other, and then they will shine with a brighter lustre, and be more clearly comprehended by us; which brings me to consider,

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The necessity of conceiving God after this manner in order to beget in our minds a serious and hearty belief of him; For it must be confessed that we are apt to frame false notions of God, which is often of most pernicious and fatal consequence. Some of the most dangerous errors in religion, have proceeded, from our fancying God, to be like unto us mortals, and subject to the same passions and affections. Indeed, it is very difficult to think of God after a right manner; for either our understandings are blinded by the clouds of our passions, or led aside by some prevailing inclination, or false bias; and hence proceed most of those extravagant notions, which the generality of men entertain concerning the Deity. Such men as are of a morose and surly temper, a malicious and envious disposition, imagine that God is as implacable as themselves; they think that he delights in punishment, that he willingly grieves the children of men, and takes all opportunities to exert his vengeance; supposing that his justice will not permit him to remember mercy. Others of a more mild and soft disposition, fancy to themselves a gentle and easy Deity, who will forgive sin without satisfaction, and pardon it without repentance; tho' both these are the conditions, which the holy scripture indispensably requires of us. And these conceptions of God, are apt to produce very pernicious effects on mens practices; an error in a necessary and fundamental truth having always a fatal influence upon practice; for the framing false notions of God in our minds generally tends, either to prophaneness, superstition, or enthusiasm. For instance,

If men have imbibed false notions of God's omnipotence and omniscience, they will be easily induced to believe, that God either cannot, or will not, concern himself with the affairs of this world, as being too many, or too trifling to employ his care and inspection; for according to such persons no-

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notions of God, they think, that he having made and set the world in order, should enjoy an eternal rest, and commit the government of it, to chance and fortune, and so remain an unconcerned spectator of what we do ; the consequence of which must be, that if God doth not govern the world, men are not accountable for their actions, nor will be ever judged for them. Such dangerous mistakes as these generally arise, from comparing the infinite knowledge and power of God, with our own finite, and imperfect capacities; and ignorantly concluding, that because we cannot be present in all places, or attend to many things at the same time, therefore God's eyes are limited that he cannot see, and his hands shortened that he cannot save. From the same source proceeds superstition ; for when men observe, that the greatest persons are pleased with little formalities and low submissions, that they love to be praised and flattered, to be courted and caressed, they imagine God to be such as themselves, and think to appease him when angry, with outward appearances of reverence, as if he liked a formal worshipper ; and from hence may be derived, the original of most of the heathen, superstitious rights ; whereas nothing will please God, but a heart full of love and gratitude, and a will submissive and ready to obey his commands ; and when men once imagined God to be an austere, morose, and cruel being, who delights in the misery of his poor creatures, and is supposed to create the generality of them, on purpose to be miserable, having only elected some few to be his chosen people, on whom he will confer salvation, without any previous merit in them ; such notions of God as these, must necessarily lead those who believe them, into the most dangerous enthusiasm ; for they will soon be induced to think themselves the only elect of God, the favourites of heaven ; that all their actions are carried on by a di-

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vine impulse, and then no fancy or imagination, however extravagant, but what will be ascribed to God, and the most absurd, ridiculous conceits, taken for inspiration. Such mischievous effects as these, proceeding from false notions of God in our minds, are the causes to which prophaneness, superstition, and enthusiasm, do chiefly owe their birth and increase. But whoever is careful to form a right notion of God in his mind, will soon experience the good effects it will produce. For such a man's religion will be solid and stable, because made up of the most social and cardinal virtues; his devotions will be rational and affectionate, such as the nature of God requires, and the reason of divine worship dictates; his will also will be submissive, his obedience uniform, and his love both to God and man, extensive and universal.

Having thus proved the necessity of forming a rational belief of God in our minds, such as lets us into the knowledge of his being and attributes; from hence we may infer that such a faith as is embraced upon good and solid reasons, is the only true faith to be relied on; for an ignorant, credulous, implicit faith, such as the church of *Rome* enjoins, will make us neither wiser nor better; but a true justifying faith, according to knowledge, is the faith that will both enable us to discover truth, and influence our obedience. From hence we may also infer, that those notions concerning God, are most necessary to be inculcated, which have the greatest influence upon our practice. For since God in the holy scripture is not described so, as to fill our heads with airy notions, but rather proposed as a pattern for our actions, we may be assured, that such practical reflections on God's attributes, are most useful and necessary for us. That which the holy writings chiefly aim at, is to fix on our minds right notions of God's purity, holiness, goodness, truth, justice

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and mercy, that so we may transcribe and imitate these perfections; that we may in some degree, be pure as God is pure, holy as he is holy, good as he is good, and that we may do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God; that so we may receive the *reward which he hath promised*: Which brings me to consider what is meant by these words, *that God is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*. But as this point will be discussed, in a distinct discourse on the subject, I shall only briefly touch on it, in this place.

God has so ordered the affairs of this world, that the exercise of virtue and religion, is the most proper and natural means, to make men happy in this life and the next. *God is a rewarder*; he not only rewards good men in another life, but often in this; *for in keeping his commandments there is great reward*. Virtue for the most part is a sufficient recompence to itself, and makes men happy here, as well as hereafter. And yet sometimes, God sees fit, for many wise ends, to send affliction upon good and virtuous men: But then the reward of their goodness and virtue is deferred till the life to come, when he will make them full and ample amends, for all those momentary afflictions they have endured here. And if God is the judge of all the earth, who will certainly reward such as obey his laws; then for the same reason we may infer, that he will severely punish all those who disobey them; for the same justice which engages him to reward the obedient, will also oblige him, to punish the obstinate offender; and the same rational principles which lead us to the belief of the one, will equally serve to convince us of the other.

The necessity of believing future rewards and punishments, is a fundamental article of the christian religion, and one of the strongest pillars of our faith; *and therefore he that comes to God, must believe that*

be is, and that he is a rewarder of those that diligently seek him. And that for this plain reason, because, if we do not believe, that God is a rewarder of such as diligently seek him, we shall want proper encouragements and motives to obey his laws; for tho' virtue is frequently, yet it is not always a sufficient reward to itself; since the fall, the corruption of man's nature is so great, that the generality of mankind have degenerated from the excellency of their original; and therefore he that dares to oppose the stream, and will stem the torrent of a vicious age, must act out of a noble principle indeed, and have in view the recompence of a more excellent reward, than any thing this world can afford. He must by an eye of faith, behold the glory of a future state, who can contemn the perishing enjoyments of this life; and look for a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, who can forego his interest here, for the testimony of a good conscience. Indeed there are some who teach, that to serve God out of the hopes of reward, is a base, mercenary principle, unworthy of a child of God, and incompatible with the high attainments of a christian; for that as God is the most excellent being, he ought, say they, to be loved, served, and obeyed, for his own sake, without any respect to a reward; and therefore to be frightened out of our sins by the terror of hell, is a slavish fear; as to be allured to our duty by the hopes of reward, is rather love to ourselves than to God.

But such persons seem to forget, that hopes and fears are the two main springs of all our actions, and that God who knows our make better than we do, addresses himself to both these, and throughout the holy writ makes our hopes and fears, the motives of our obedience. And shall we presume to be wiser than our creator? what must such men think of themselves, to reject such helps and assistances,

tances, as God has afforded them? are they more holy and righteous than Moses, who had respect to the recompence of reward? is their love and zeal more fervent, than that of the whole army of martyrs, who were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might enjoy a better resurrection? would they be thought wiser and better than our Saviour, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame? their error and mistake is therefore very plain and evident; for as God has made us reasonable creatures, so he requires us to obey him, from such principles as he has implanted in us.

What remains then, but that the serious consideration of those great and excellent rewards which God has prepared for those that love him; and of those dreadful and intolerable punishments which he has denounced against impenitent offenders, should engage us to a sincere repentance for our past sins, and a firm resolution of a better and more universal obedience to all the laws of God? that so at that great day of account, when all the secrets of mens hearts shall be laid open, and every one rewarded according to his deeds, we may enter into the joy of our Lord, who is the rewarder of all that diligently seek him.

S E R

DISCOURSE III. Tillotson.

The usefulness and reasonableness of divine faith.

Heb. ii. 6.

But without faith it is impossible to please God.

THAT faith is the great principle of religion without which a man cannot be religious, will appear, first from the nature of all human actions, whether civil or religious, either of which supposes some kind of faith, or persuasion. All human actions have reference to some end, and consequently suppose some knowledge, and the use of means whereby it may be attained. Unless a man believes and is persuaded that such a thing is good, desirable, and fit to be propos'd as an end possible to be attained; and that the means he uses will probably effect and obtain it; he will do nothing about it. So that without faith it is impossible for any thing of moment to be undertaken, any concern of consequence to be accomplished. Thus in civil actions, and the common affairs of life; all these are done by virtue of some faith or persuasion concerning them. For example, no man would apply himself to husbandry, or merchandise, but on some belief, or persuasion of the possibility and necessity, or at least usefulness and convenience thereof to the ends of life: No man would plow, and sow, did he not believe that corn was necessary for the support of our lives, and that very probably he would reap some fruit and benefit of his labour and industry. No man would traffick to foreign parts, did he not believe he should there meet with com-

milities, and procure them on such terms, as would recompense the hazard and danger of his charge and pains; and so in all other actions of life. The same holds good in things of a divine and religious nature; where nothing is done without faith. No man will worship God, unless he believes and is persuaded, that *there is such a being as God*, whose excellency and perfections may demand our respect and veneration: Nor unless he also believes the goodness of this God, *that he will reward those that diligently serve him*. For all acts of religion being reasonable, suppose at least an object, and an end; namely, that there is a God to be worshipped, and a reward for faithfully serving him. This faith is even necessary to natural religion: and as to God's revealed will, no man can obey it, unless he is persuaded that it is God's will. For instance, as no man will obey the precepts of the bible as divine laws and commands, but from a certain persuasion, that the doctrine contained in the holy scriptures is a divine revelation; so no man can receive Christ as the *messiah* and saviour of the world, and pay obedience to his laws, unless he believes him *sent from God, and ordained by him to be a prince and a saviour*. Hence appears the necessity of faith to religion.

Now I shall shew what influence a divine faith hath, to make men religious. A true divine faith supposes a man satisfied and persuaded, of the reasonableness and necessity of being religious: That it is reasonable in itself, and necessary to his interest. As to the reasonableness of religion; he that seriously believes a God, believes there is a being of all excellency and perfection, that is infinitely good and wise, just and powerful, that made and preserves all things. And he that believes such a being as this, must think it reasonable that he should be esteemed, honoured and adored by all his creatures, who are sensible and apprehensive of those excellencies.

cies. That as he is infinitely good, the fountain of our being, and of all the blessings we enjoy ; we should therefore love our great benefactor, and thankfully acknowledge his goodness to us ; not only by constantly praising him, but by an universal obedience to his will, and a cheerful submission to his pleasure. For what is more reasonable than gratitude ? that as he is infinitely wise and powerful, as well as good, we should trust in, and depend upon him, in all conditions, and seek to him for what we want ; and what is more reasonable than to place our confidence in him, who is able and willing to do us good ? than to sue to him who knows our wants, and is ready to supply them ? and as he is truth itself, and hath been pleased to reveal his will to us ; what more reasonable than to believe those revelations, which *God, who cannot lie,* hath made, and to comply with the intention of them ? and as he is the original pattern of all excellency and perfections ; what more reasonable than to imitate and resemble the divine perfections ? and these are the sum and substance of all religion. So that whoever firmly believes a God, and that he hath revealed his will to the world, must needs be persuaded of the reasonableness of religion, and of all those duties it requires of us ; also that it is possible for us to perform all religious duties, by God's grace and assistance, which he is ready to afford, if we beg it of him. A true divine faith, also supposes a man to be satisfied and persuaded of the necessity of religion, and that it is every man's interest to be religious. That to be so, highly tends to our advantage, and to be otherwise, is eminently to our prejudice. That if we are religious, we shall be eternally happy ; if we are not, misery will be our portion for ever. And whoever believes a God and his revelations, cannot but be satisfied of this, as well from the nature and reason of the thing, as from the promises and threatenings of God's word.

1. From the nature and reason of the thing. The greatest happiness of man consists in enjoying God the supreme good ; the greatest misery is to be separated from him. But God can only be enjoyed by religion. Holiness makes us like God, and to resemble and love him, will make us happy. There can be no happiness without pleasure, nor can we be pleased with what we do not love, nor yet love another object, without a likeness and suitable disposition. So long as God is good, holy, and hates sin ; and so long as we are evil, impure, and lovers of iniquity ; there can be no happy intercourse, no agreeable communion, and delightful society between God and us. Happiness results from a holy temper, as misery unavoidably does from a wicked one. Sin separates between God and us to hinder our happiness ; it being impossible for a wicked man to be near God, or enjoy him.

2. From the promises and threatenings of God's word. The scripture expressly promises everlasting glory and happiness to them that obey him, and threatens wicked men with dreadful and eternal punishment ; *to them that by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, he hath promised, eternal life ; but to them that obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, he hath threatened indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish.* If we believe the gospel, which assures us of an eternal state of happiness or misery, we must certainly think it our interest, to endeavour to attain the promised happiness, and avoid the threatened misery. All men naturally desire happiness, and dread misery ; these desires and fears are innate, and inseparable from our nature ; and whoever is firmly persuaded of the promises and threatenings of the gospel, must believe it to be his highest interest to be religious. Fear and hope are the two passions that govern us ; hope is to excite us to our duty, fear to restrain us from

Disc. III. *reasonableness of divine faith.* 31

from sin: And the greater good or evil, that is hoped for, or feared; the greater power and influence will these passions have upon us. But a greater good there cannot be, than perfect, everlasting happiness; nor a greater evil, than extreme, eternal misery: And a true divine faith contains in it, this hope and fear. For faith in the gospel promises, is the hopes of eternal life, and a belief of the gospel's threatenings is the fear of hell and eternal misery: So that such a faith must certainly have a great influence on men, to make them religious; and those men who are not moved by the hopes of the greatest good, nor by the fears of the greatest danger, nothing will prevail with them. I shall now apply what has been said.

First, this shews that 'tis for want of faith, there is so little religion in the world. Men are not firmly persuaded there is a God; that there is an omniscient Being above them who knows and takes notice, of every thought, word and action; who is so good and gracious as to make happy those that love and obey him; so just and powerful as to make those miserable who hate and rebel against him. Men are not really convinced, that their souls are immortal; that there is another life, in which they shall be eternally happy or miserable, according as they behave in this world. Men are not firmly persuaded that the scriptures are the word of God; that the precepts and prohibitions of the bible are the laws of a great king, who will amply reward the observance, and severely punish the violation of them. Men do not believe that the promises and threatenings of God's word are true, and shall be accomplished. For did men believe these things, they would be religious. They would not dare to live in any known sin, or impiety of life; unless we can imagine a man would be seriously unwilling to be happy, and earnestly long to be miserable for ever. For he that believes the

principles of religion, the precepts, promises, and threatenings contained in this holy book, and can yet continue in sin, must both renounce the principles of a reasonable creature, and quit the very inclinations of his nature; that is, he must knowingly refuse what he naturally desires, which is happiness; and must embrace what he most abhors, which is misery.

Were we verily persuaded, that the great, holy, and just God continually observes us, and that nothing is hid from him; we should not dare to commit any sin in his sight, and under the eye of him, who is our father and master, our sovereign and judge, our friend and benefactor, who is invested with all these titles, and may demand all that reverence and respect in which he stands thus related to us. Did we believe the holiness and justice of God, that he hates and will punish sin; should we dare to make him a witness of our wickedness, who we believe will be the avenger of it? did we believe that when we leave this world, we must go either into life everlasting, or into eternal and intolerable torments, should we not use our utmost care and diligence to attain the one and avoid the other? were we heartily possest with the belief of eternity, how would we despise temporal and transitory things? how would we neglect the concerns of this life, overlook the little impertinences of time, and refer all our thoughts, cares and endeavours to eternity? This great and important interest would so employ our minds, time and diligence, that we should scarce regard any thing else. We should be restless and impatient till we had secured this grand affair, and made all interests of this world stoop to the vast concerns of eternity. Thus we should act, were we firmly persuaded of another life after this. Did we believe the scriptures to be the word of God,

and

and to contain matters of the highest importance to our everlasting happiness, plain and easy directions how to attain eternal life, and escape eternal misery; we should much converse with them, *meditate on them day and night*, read them with all diligence, and carefully practise their directions. Let men therefore pretend what they will, it is evident, that those who neglect God and religion, and contradict the precepts of his word by their lives, do not firmly believe there is a God, nor that this book is the word of God. If this faith and persuasion were firmly rooted in men, they could not live wickedly. For a man that desires happiness, can no more neglect those means which he knows is necessary to obtain it; than a man that desires life, will omit the means proper for its preservation.

Secondly, If faith has so great an influence upon religion, let me persuade all men to believe. And no man can be religious, unless he believes, first, the principles of natural religion; as that there is a God, that his soul is immortal, and that there are future rewards. And, secondly, that the scriptures are the word of God. Therefore whoever would persuade men to be religious, or to improve in virtue and holiness, must labour to strengthen this principle of faith. Faith is the root of all other graces; and they will flourish or decay, according to the degrees of our faith. He that would persuade a man to do any thing, must effect it, either by entreaty, authority, or argument. He may entreat him as a friend, command him as a subject, or convince him as a man. But to entreat, or charge men to believe any thing, before they are convinced by sufficient arguments, is very ridiculous. To entreat or charge a person to do any thing, supposes he can perform it if he will. But a man cannot believe what he will: The nature of human understanding is such, that it cannot assent without evidence, or

believe any truth without reason for it, any more than a man can see a thing without light ; so that he who would persuade another to believe either the principles of natural religion, or any divine revelation, must prove them to be true ; it being unreasonable to desire a man to believe any thing without reason. I shall therefore briefly offer some arguments and considerations to persuade men to the belief of the principles of natural religion, and of the revelation which God hath made of his mind and will in the scriptures.

To persuade men to believe the principles of natural religion ; such as the being of God, the immortality of the soul, and future rewards after this life, I shall offer these two considerations ; namely, that it is most reasonable, and infinitely most prudent so to do. As to the being of God; certain it is, that there is a world, however it came ; and that mankind do generally consent in a confident persuasion that there is a God, whatever is the cause of it. Let us then enquire, whether a reasonable account can be given of these, without a God. Supposing there is no God, how came this vast and orderly frame of the world ? either it was from eternity of itself ; or it began in time. As to its being eternal, tho' the heavens and the earth in general, are permanent and continue the same ; yet it is impossible to conceive this of things which succeed one after another. Thus in the generation of men, there can be no doubt, whether every one was from another, or some of themselves. For whatever number of causes can be imagined in orderly succession, some of them must be of themselves without any cause. And that which is of itself, and the cause of all others, is the first. So that there must be a first man. And the age of man being finite, this first man must have a beginning. So that it is impossible there should have been an infinite succession of men ; and consequently, men

men were not always. And as to the world's being eternal, even Aristotle himself, the great asserter of the world's eternity, acknowledges, that an infinite progres and succession of causes, is one of the greatest absurdities. —— Or, supposing the world began in time, it must either be made by counsel and design ; (that is) produced by some being that knew how to contrive and frame it, in the manner it is, (which is easy to conceive of an infinitely wise, good, and powerful being :) But this is to own a God : or, else the matter of it being supposed to have been always, and in continual motion, it at last happened to fall into the order, in which we now see the world. But can any man believe, that in the infinite variety which is in the world, all things should happen by chance, as well and orderly, as infinite wisdom could contrive ? whoever believes this must do it with his will, and not his understanding. Since then something is of itself ; how easy is it to grant such a being to be of itself, as hath other perfections joined to necessary existence, such as infinite goodness, wisdom, and power ? let this be allowed, and there will be no difficulty in conceiving how such a being could make the world*.

It is also certain that mankind do generally consent in a confident persuasion that there is a God, whatever was the cause of it. Now the reason of so universal a consent in all places and ages of the world, must be one and constant ; but no one and constant reason of this can be given, unless taken from the frame and nature of man's mind and understanding, which hath the notion of a Deity stamp'd on it, or in other words, hath such an understanding, as will in its own free use and exercise, find out a God. And what more reasonable than to think, that if we are God's workmanship, he should set this mark of himself upon us, that we might know to whom we belong ?

* Vide Disc. I.

As to the immortality of the soul. Admitting a God, who is an infinite spirit ; it is easy to imagine the possibility of a finite spirit. And supposing the goodness of God, no man can doubt, but that when he made all things, he would make some best; and the same goodness which moved him to make things at all, would be a reason to continue to them the longest duration of which they are capable. And as to future rewards ; the holiness and justice of God, supposes that *he loves righteousness and hates iniquity* ; and that as governor of the world, he is concerned to countenance goodness, and discourage sin ; also considering the promiscuous dispensation of his providence in this world, and how *all things happen alike to all* ; it is most reasonable to conclude, that after this life, men shall be punished and rewarded.

And as it is most reasonable, so it is most prudent to believe the articles of natural religion. In matters of great moment, a prudent man will incline to the safest side of the question. Supposing the reasons for and against the principles of religion were equal, yet the danger and hazard is so unequal, as would sway a prudent man to the affirmative. Suppose a man believes there is no God, nor life after this, and that he may be in the right, tho' its impossible that he should be certain ; yet all the advantage he gains by his opinion, relates only to this world and present time ; for he cannot be the better for it, when he is not, and what advantage is it to him here ? why he takes the liberty to do what he pleases. It furnishes him with a stronger temptation to be intemperate, lustful and unjust ; and to do those things which prejudice his body and health, cloud his reason, and darken his understanding ; which will make him enemies in this world, and bring him into danger. So that it is no advantage to any man to be vicious. And if we would be virtuous,

tuous, temperate, and just; the belief of the principles of religion will be no obstacle, but a furtherance to us in such a course of life. All the advantages a man can hope for, by disbelieving the principles of religion, is to escape trouble and persecution in this world, which may happen to him on that account. But supposing there is a God, and another life, then there is a vast difference as to the consequences of these opinions; as much as between finite and infinite, time and eternity.

To persuade men to believe the scriptures, I propose this consideration. If there is a God that governs the world and all things in it, may we not reasonably think he hath a particular concern for man, the noblest part of this visible world? and since he hath made men capable of eternal duration, we ought to suppose that he hath sufficiently provided for their eternal happiness, by revealing to them, the terms and condition thereof. Let then any man produce a book coming from God, that for the matter of it is so worthy of God, the doctrines whereof are so useful, the precepts so reasonable, the arguments so powerful, the truth thereof confirmed by so many great and unquestionable miracles, and transmitted to posterity in publick and authentic records, written by those who were eye and ear witnesses of what they related, and free from suspicion of any worldly interest and design; and which by the power and reasonableness of the doctrines contained in it, so miraculously prevailed in the world, by weak and inconsiderable means, in opposition to all the wit and power of the world; as is the case of the bible in all these respects; I say, let any one produce such a book; and I would believe it as soon as the bible.

If then there is any weight in these considerations to sway reasonable men; let me entreat them diligently and impartially to consider these matters, and not

not suffer themselves to be biassed by prejudice; passion, or interest to a contrary persuasion. Thus much I may with reason desire of men: for tho' we cannot believe what we will, yet we may if we will, consider things seriously and impartially, and yield or withhold our assent, as we find reason for it after a careful search and examination. If any man will offer a serious argument against any of the principles of religion, and will debate the matter soberly, as one that would gladly be satisfied, he deserves to be heard. But he who turns religion into raillery, and attempts to confute it by bold jests, makes not religion but himself ridiculous, because he sports with his life. So that it concerns every one, who would not trifle away his soul, and fool himself into irrecoverable misery, seriously to enquire into these things, and patiently consider the arguments brought for them; and while we are examining these points, we should deal fairly and impartially with ourselves, and not regard any sensual worldly interests.—We should think that we have not the making of things true or false. That the principles of religion are either true or false, before we examine them. The truth of things are already fixed, either there is a God or no God, our souls are immortal, or they are not; the scriptures are a divine revelation, or an imposture; one of these is certain and necessary, and not now to be altered. Things will not comply with our conceits, and bend to our interests. And if upon enquiry we are convinced, that it is the greatest reason and prudence to believe there is a God and future state, and that the scriptures are the word of God, then let us meditate much of these things; attend to the proper consequences of such a persuasion; and resolve to live as becomes those who believe there is a God, another life after this, and that it is our interest to obey the precepts of his word. Let us labour to strengthen ourselves in this belief. Because faith

faith is the spring of all rational actions, the root of all other graces; and according to the strength and weakness of faith, our holiness, obedience and graces will flourish or decay. And because the matters of faith fall not under our senses, and the things of another world are invisible and distant, consequently not so apt to affect us, as present and sensible things; we should therefore take the more pains with our selves, and frequently have in mind the thoughts of God, the happiness and misery of another world; that so they may have as great an effect upon us now, if they were present, and we saw them with our eyes.

DISCOURSE IV. Moor.

Of the wisdom and providence of God.

Prov. 3. 6.

In all thy ways acknowledge him.

IT would not be easy for men with little temptation, to be drawn into great sins, were they fully persuaded, that God was ever present, did observe their actions, and would require a strict account of them; nor would good christians be terrified with the remote appearances of danger, and sink under afflictions, did they believe God was always both ready and willing, to deliver and support them. That boldness and security which appears in bad men, and those unreasonable groundless fears, which are to be found in some good christians, do chiefly proceed from their not having a real persuasion of the omnipresence of God, who observes our behavior.

behaviour and will certainly punish sinners, but protect and preserve his servants.

There is nothing will so effectually suppress wickedness, dismay and terrify sinners, as frequent meditations on the divine presence; nothing will so much animate our spirits in all conditions, as daily to contemplate the unerring providence of God, which disposes all events by wise rules, and sends good or evil to men, as their circumstances require, in order to make them better. Did men seriously believe that God governs the world, and directs all human affairs, they could not ascribe the issue of things to their own power, nor impute their prosperous condition, to their sole wisdom and management; nor would they think, that those pains, losses, and calamities came by accident and chance, which God sends on purpose to try their love, reform their manners, or as a punishment for their sins. And it must greatly abate the bitterness of afflictions, to consider, that they who bear them with meekness and patient resignation to the pleasure of God, will thereby improve in grace and virtue, and may the sooner expect to have them removed. Indeed, such as think God does not concern himself in the affairs of the world, nor regard the lives of men, can never truly reverence, nor sincerely worship him; but a steady belief of divine providence, will ever be attended with the love and fear of God.

That therefore we may in the course of our lives, direct our designs to God's glory, use his blessings discreetly and temperately; and when he afflicts us, be patient, quiet and humble, and with an entire resignation submit to his righteous will; that we may be grateful for his mercies, prudently depend on his providence, and in all our ways acknowledge him; let us duly attend to the following considerations.

First,

First, we ought to be fully assured, that nothing in this life can happen, without the order, or permission of providence. God did not make the world, and then disregard it; but his power as much appears, in its preservation and government, as at the first creation of it. What his wisdom thought fit to give being and life to, his power and goodness sustains and preserves; knowing that all the works of his hands are worthy his providence and care. God observes every thing he has made, and the behaviour of all his creatures; he perpetually supports the order of things, and directs them all in such manner, as may best promote the good and happiness of the creation, and most illustrate his own glory. All this is evident from the nature of God, a being of infinite perfection. But to deny providence, or suppose that all things come by inflexible fate, or depends on the uncertainty of fortune, is most repugnant to his blessed nature, and contradicts almost every one of his attributes and perfections. For he could not be almighty, was there any superior power to his; he would not be infinitely wise, were the vast productions of his power, subject to no laws; his goodness would not be boundless, did he not regard those who loved him, and rescue from misery, those who suffered for his sake; his knowledge would not be immense, did he not observe our words and actions, and even the thoughts of our hearts. And were not all things open to the divine view, why should the good hope in God's mercy, or the wicked tremble at his justice? If he did not regard the actions of men, the one would have no motives to love him, nor the other any reason to fear his displeasure.

Prayer is the primary duty of christians, the great instrument by which they obtain a supply of all necessaries, both temporal and spiritual; and the chief support of their minds under trouble, to endure

dure the sharpest sufferings, and conquer the strongest temptations. But if God has no knowledge of human affairs, the reason and foundation of prayer ceases; which supposes that God knows our particular circumstances, hears our complaints, when in distress, and has power and will, to relieve and assist those, who make their supplications to him. Did afflictions happen by meer chance, we should not know how to behave under them; but when we are certain they are dispensed by the merciful hand of our most gracious father, for the benefit of our souls, with what readiness and courage should we submit to them? did not God know and observe our actions, how could he now govern the world, or judge it hereafter? so that we cannot question the truth of providence without denying all the arguments for divine worship, for the love and fear of God, for trust in his mercy, and the expectations of future rewards and punishments.

It is objected against providence, that for God to inspect human affairs, to observe the trifling actions of men, would be too great a condescension in the divine majesty. This is an *Epicurean* objection, which consists in supposing God to be like unto men, incapable of wisely transacting human affairs, without much thought and trouble. But in answer to this, it should be considered, that all the uneasiness and difficulty which men find in any business, arises from their faculties being stitiated; they are forced to have recourse to long consideration, and busily employ their thoughts, before they can resolve on what is fit to be done, and even then know not how to accomplish their designs. But the boundless wisdom, power and knowledge of God, cannot be exposed to any of these difficulties and objections. So that to disown a providence, is to deny the existence of an infinite perfect being.

But

But as the firm belief of a providence is of vast consequence to our souls, so God has given us full assurance of it, in the holy scriptures. We there learn, that rational beings live, move, and subsist by the goodness of God; that he condescends to feed the little sparrows, to clothe the fading lillies, and even to number the hairs on our head; that he concerns himself in our birth, makes the barren woman to be a joyful mother of children, and is our hope from the womb; and that our whole dependence is upon him, from the time we hung on our mothers breasts. We are there taught that the divine providence extends itself to societies and nations, as well as particular persons; that both their prosperity and adversity come from him; that except *he keeps the city, the watchman watcheth but in vain.* That nothing is hid from him, but all things under heaven lie naked and open to his observation; that our whole behaviour is registered as it were in a book, which shall be opened at the great day of judgment; and we then sentenced, to everlasting happiness or misery, according to the good or evil, we have done in this life. The holy scriptures assure us, that God suffers afflictions to fall on the righteous, which however it may at first seem to be contrary to his goodness, yet the reasons of such proceedings will at last appear, and in the end, all things shall turn to the benefit and advantage of them who love him. We there learn that the preservation and continuance of life is not in our power; that length of days depends not on our care and skill, but that God keeps the issues of life and death in his own hands, without letting us know the time of our death, that so we may live in constant expectation of it.—That the enjoyment of what we possess is very precarious, for in a sudden we may lose those things we best esteemed, and thought ourselves secure of. In this word of God, we read of strange changes

changes made in kingdoms, how he pulls some down, and sets up others, by means the most unlikely and unexpected. Of the wonderful effects of providence, we have undoubted examples in all ages; such as the rise and declension of kingdoms, the surprizing periods which have been put to mighty empires, founded in deep policy, and after a long existence; God in a moment destroying the frame and foundation of things, which were laid by the counsels of men, the most skilful and sagacious. When the iniquities of any nation are ripe for ruin, then destruction comes swiftly on them, and they shall fall by the hands of that God, whose mercies they abused and despised. Histories of all countries afford instances of this kind.

It is then evident, that nothing can happen to us, without the order or permission of providence; that not only the prosperity and adversity, the poverty and riches, the wisdom and understanding, the length of days, and death of particular persons, but also the rise and fall of nations and kingdoms come from the Lord; who humbleth himself to behold, the things that are done in heaven and earth; be sheweth loving kindness unto thousands, and recompenseth the iniquity of the fathers, into the bosom of the children after them. The great, the mighty God, the Lord of hosts is his name, great in counsel, and mighty in works; whose eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men, to give every one according to his ways, and the fruit of his doings. Psal. 113. 6. Jer. 32. 18,19.

Secondly, Let us consider, that to receive evil from God, as well as good, is very agreeable to his wisdom; because the miseries God suffers to fall on men, serve many great ends of his, in governing the world. By disappointments and croſs events, we discover the vanity of earthly pleasures, which wean us from transitory enjoyments, and make us to have more immediate recourse to God, and entirely to

to depend on his wisdom and goodness, both as to our present, and future state and condition. Prosperity indeed, we all receive most kindly of God ; but when he sends afflictions, tho' for the good of our souls, and much less than our sins deserve, we then presently complain, both of his justice and wisdom. And yet *happy is the man whom God correcteth, for him the Lord loveth; therefore despise not the chastening of the Almighty, whose judgments are right.* Job 5. 17. Prov. 3. 12. Psal. 109. 75. But as it is an objection against the wisdom of providence, and a difficulty with many, that the righteous should sometimes suffer, and be afflicted in this world, let the following considerations be duly considered.

That we are not competent judges either of mens righteousness, or the reasons of their sufferings ; we know not the secrets of men's hearts, to distinguish the good from the bad. Those who make a fair appearance of religion, may be very wicked and exceedingly vicious, and unless we certainly knew who are sincerely virtuous, and who are hypocrites, this objection ought not to be made. Nor can we truly judge of the happiness or misery, the prosperity or afflictions of men ; for those who seem happy, may have many unruly passions in their breasts, to imbibter all the comforts and pleasures of their greatness, honor or plenty. And those who appear vile and contemptible, may have that peace in their minds, that freedom from lust and sin, that joy springing up in their souls, from the sense of God's favour, and the conscientious discharge of their duty, as that they would not change conditions with the greatest monarch on earth. Good men may be straitned with poverty, or have little authority and interest in the world, and yet be very happy ; for happiness does not consist in abundance of riches, or a large compass of power ; these things are often a burden. But a com-

composed mind, devout thoughts, contentment in every condition, a cheerful resignation to the will of God, when crosses, sickness, disgrace, and losses happen, is what good men desire, and in the enjoyment of which they find real and most intense happiness.

Hence we may be instructed how to take the measures of our felicity, and how to judge, who are the happy, who the miserable!—that no man is happy, by reason of his vast riches, or great honors, but only he, who has a generous mind, and delights in performing acts of charity; so that he is merciful and lendeth, he disperseth and giveth to the poor, and his benevolence shall be had in everlasting remembrance. That a man may not be happy, for having a healthy and strong body; but he is truly so, who having an infirm and sickly constitution, carefully preserves a sound and spotless mind. Nor is that man miserable, who meets with much unkind usage, and many cross accidents; but only he, who being elated with prosperous successes disregards heaven, and seeks for rest and satisfaction, in the uncertain and deceitful enjoyments of the present life. Real felicity therefore manifestly consists in the innocence and tranquility of the mind. And since we cannot judge of the piety or happiness of men, it evidently follows, there is but little weight, in that popular objection against the divine providence, taken from the seeming adversity of the good, and prosperity of the wicked. And that God sometimes removes hence his faithful servants, when young and in the vigor of their years, is no reflection on God's providence, nor yet an instance of his unkindness to them; since what greater favour could God express for their short services, than to remove them, from the sin and danger, the troubles and vexations of this life, and reward them with eternal happiness, in his kingdom of glory.

And

And let it be further considered, that such is the state of this world, that the virtuous must of necessity be often exposed, to the same troubles and misfortunes as happen to the wicked; for there will be here *one event to the righteous and the wicked.* The calamities of war, pestilence, famine and fire, involve alike men of all conditions, both the good and bad. The nipping frosts, scorching heats, raging floods, and blasting winds, make no difference between them; nor can storms at sea distinguish between their goods, tho' in the same ship. Nor must any one expect, that God will alter the course of nature for his sake, which he hath established for great and wise ends. And yet God by these common calamities intends our good, by making them subservient to amend the temper of our minds. By adversity, he tries our constancy and affection; whether we will love and reverence him, as much when we are afflicted, as in our prosperity; and the end of his visitation being attained, he will soon deliver us from our grievances. Besides, to be frequently interrupted by afflictions in the enjoyment of the low, despicable pleasures of this life, will be a means to lessen our esteem of them. Prosperity tends to corrupt mens morals, by tempting them to rely on their own power; but adversity reforms our lives, discovers our weakness and wants, which without God's assistance would be insupportable. The nature and circumstances of all our afflictions, are ordered by the wisdom of God; and when they have humbled our vanity, extinguished our lust, abated our love of riches, and brought us to a just sense of ourselves, God will recal them, and visit us with the light of his countenance.

Thirdly, if we duly consider things, we shall be forced to acknowledge the goodness and mercy of God, in our greatest sufferings. As God is the supreme lord and governor of the world, and we his creatures

creatures, dependant on his good will and pleasure, he may without injustice, take what we have from us, when he pleases. Our life, health, relations, estate, and all we enjoy, are the free gifts of his bounty; and if he recalls them all, he only resumes his own right. Besides, if we consider God as the great judge of men, that he grants us the use of his creatures conditionally, and threatens punishment to those who disobey him; the goodness of God in all our troubles will then clearly appear, by his not dealing with us according to the measures of strict justice. If instead of punishing, God only gently corrects us, that we may reform our faults, and grieve for having offended him, how can we but adore and magnify the goodness and riches of his mercy! were not sinners to feel the weight of God's justice, they would not fear his power, but be utterly ruined. And yet in the punishment God inflicts on the greatest sinners, there is, we may observe, a plentiful mixture of mercy. God tempers his judgment with his mercy, the one to preserve in men, an awful regard of his majesty, the other to deter them from running into despair. His justice is necessary to make bold sinners dread his displeasure, and acknowledge their infirmities; but where such tenderness appears in the consciences of men, so as to make them extremely fearful of their condition; then will God display the treasures of his compassion to their disturbed souls, disperse their groundless fears, refresh and comfort them with his mercies. Again,

We must acknowledge the divine goodness in our losses and sufferings, when we consider, that in the gospel there is no express promise, for God to bestow temporal prosperity on good men. In the christian religion there is no absolute promise of worldly power, honour or wealth, even to them who live according to the rules thereof; and shall sinners then demand that as a matter of right, which

God

God never promised to his best servants. Our saviour's kingdom being of another world, it cannot be obtained by the glories of this. Nor did he treat great men with more respect than the poor; nay, he pronounces his blessing on the humble, the poor in spirit, the meek, the merciful, the pure in heart, and those that suffer for righteousness sake. Had our Lord come into the world encircled with all that power and pomp, the Jews expected of their Messiah; it would have tempted his followers, to have set their hearts on the splendor of the present state; when his principal design, both by his example and doctrine, was to teach his disciples to neglect and despise such fading vanities. Since then a large portion of worldly goods is not promised by Christ; but only a supply of the necessaries of life, which for the most part, men have sufficiently afforded them; we ought to acknowledge our great obligations to the divine goodness, with respect to our condition upon earth. And even in case of persecution, we shall have the less reason to complain, or be uneasy when thus afflicted, because such our sufferings will vastly tend to our future perfection. Besides, are we to expect kinder usage from the world than Christ and his apostles, than the army of martyrs and confessors, and all the primitive christians, who laid down their lives for the gospel, and were perfected thro' sufferings?

Lastly, we must acknowledge the goodness of God, whether in sickness, pain or trouble, when we meditate on the inestimable rewards of the next life, which he has promised, as a recompence for our sufferings here. The joys of heaven, should be enough to support us under the pressures and troubles of this world. In heaven, we shall be free from sin, and every temptation to do evil; we shall be above the power and malice of the devil, to corrupt our innocence and ensnare us by his devices.

Here the enemies of our souls have a constant eye upon us; what a perpetual struggle have we, to overcome our lusts, to subdue our passions; so that we may cry out with the apostle, *O wretched creatures that we are, who shall deliver us from this body of death?* From the tyranny of our impetuous lusts, that would lead us captive to the gates of death! but in the next world these sorrows, fears and dangers shall cease; and an undisturbed peace, tranquility, and serenity of mind shall then take place. We shall also get rid of all the vexations, grievances and miseries of this life; for neither poverty, contempt, nor disgrace will then threaten us. The covetousness of men will not lessen our plenty, their perverse temper disturb our peace, nor their cruelty be exercised on us. We shall meet with no difficulties to perplex our thoughts, no dangers to terrify us, but ever be in perpetual love and friendship. These infirm, crazy, and fading bodies will be changed into heavenly, and immortal ones. We shall be subject to no diseases, pains, hunger or thirst; but be clothed with robes of beautiful light, and for ever shine as stars in the firmament. In that holy place, our desires will be gratified, our appetites satisfied, our highest expectations answered, and all our hopes blessed with enjoyment! We shall be admitted into the most pleasing company, converse with angels, and holy men, renowned for virtue and piety; we shall sit down by our near relations and friends, whose departure hence was so grievous, and for ever love and rejoice together, and sing praises to the Lord. We shall then behold the glorious face of our dear redeemer, who sacrificed his own blood, to rescue us from the power and guilt of sin, and bring us to eternal glory. And what exceeds all our imagination, we shall come into the presence of the great and mighty God, see him as he is, and be for ever admiring and adoring,

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the inconceiveable brightness and splendor of his infinite majesty.

When we duly consider that these shall be the immense rewards of our slight and short afflictions ; how just and reasonable is it, that we should in all things submit to the will of God ? nothing will tend more to God's glory, and our own interest, or produce greater comfort and peace in our minds, than thankfully to receive whatever God gives us, patiently and meekly to bear the loss of all he takes from us ; because he will so infinitely recompense all our present sufferings in the next life. And since God has provided the most perfect happiness for our souls in the future state ; O that we could excite our desires and endeavours to prepare for those mansions of bliss ! since he hath been pleased to chuse our bodies, for his holy spirit to dwell in ; O that we would free them from all malice and impurity, from every unruly lust and passion ! O that we might have so lively a sense of God's goodness, as instantly to repent of every sin, to lay aside all thoughts and interests of this world, till we have made a firm and lasting peace with God ! and may we so frequently meditate on the glories of his nature, as earnestly to labour and strive to grow like him, in truth, purity, love and mercy ; may we so often contemplate on heaven, that the joys thereof may deeply affect our souls with the most delightful prospect. Did we deliberately consider these things, we should make it our great business to fit and duly qualify ourselves, for the kingdom of heaven. We should strive to live as the righteous man doth, did we often reflect and seriously think upon the peace and joy with which he ends his course, and departs this life. To the good and virtuous, death will be only a passage from bad men, to holy angels, innocent and blessed souls ; from labours, troubles and toils, to perpetual ease, quiet and most durable satisfaction ; from

pains, grief and sickness, to everlasting and most exquisite delights.

But alas! the wicked? for they will at their deaths tremble, their hearts will fail them, their consciences astonish and amaze them, at the remembrance of their many vile sins, and notorious abuses of God's mercy? which will then be represented to them, in a most lively and affecting manner. They will then have no other prospect before their eyes, but that of misery, horror, and confusion.

On the other hand, good christians will then look up to heaven, in certain expectation of their approaching salvation. And in what transports of pleasure, will their souls be, the instant they are united to their bodies; beholding their glorious saviour appearing in all his majesty, most graciously rememb'ring the zeal, love, sincere affection and piety, which they expressed for him and his cause, here on earth! what tongue can describe the joy we shall feel in our hearts, when the angels who conceived so much pleasure at our first conversion, shall loudly triumph at the consummation of our happiness! how will our souls exult with grateful reflections on the goodness of God, when the patriarchs, prophets, holy apostles, glorious martyrs, and all good people shall congratulate our felicity, and sing praises to our redeemer, for this accomplishment of our salvation! when Christ shall present us to his father, and enumerate all our prayers, fasting and fears; all our acts of devotion, charity and compassion; our meekness, temperance and chastity; our kindness to strangers, our humility in prosperity, patience and submission in adversity; our constancy and steady adherence to the true faith. When these shall be all distinctly rehearsed, accepted, and adjudged worthy of eternal rewards! how thankful shall we be to God, for the day in which we began our repentance! how shall we love the man, who

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was the instrument and occasion of our conversion! who first directed us to the right way to everlasting happiness!

DISCOURSE V. *Balguy.*

Of the excellency and immortality of the soul.

Eccles. 12. 7.

And the spirit shall return unto God, who gave it.

THIS chapter begins with an exhortation to youth, to season their minds with an early sense of God and their duty; that it may direct them in all their ways, and support and comfort them in the declension of life. The wise preacher shews the folly of deferring the thoughts of religion, and the improvements of mens minds to their latter days. He considers old age as a very improper season to accomplish this great work, it being scarce able to bear its own weight, and then describes, in a noble allegory, its various infirmities and gradual decays, till it terminates in death and dissolution. He next pursues the soul and body after their separation, points out the fate and lot of both, and traces them to their respective originals. *The dust,* says he, shall return to *the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.* That is, the body shall dissolve into that earth of which it was first composed, and be incorporated with it; but the soul being of a nobler nature, will survive the separation, and return into the hands of its creator; to give an account of itself, and to be dealt with by him according to the condition in which he shall

find it. My text therefore is a plain and positive declaration of a future state, and a probable consequence of the perpetuity of it.

Of all questions that can possibly come under our consideration, the most important is, whether there be not another life after this? whether we are to die like brute beasts that have no understanding, or to live again in a future state, and exist for ever? These are points of such vast moment, such infinite consequence, that they necessarily demand every man's most serious attention; for on the resolution of them, our all depends. If death makes an utter end of us, and we have no prospect beyond it; this life may be looked upon as a meer shadow, or dream not worth regarding.—But perhaps it will be demanded, what occasion is there, to examine a question that we already find determined to our hands. For does not revelation, assure us of a future state? and are *not life and immortality, fully brought to light by the gospel?* This is very true; but still the proofs and evidences of natural reason deserve to be considered; partly to arm our minds against the objections of unbelievers, and enable us to promote their conviction; and partly for the support and confirmation of our own faith. And indeed it cannot but give satisfaction to every rational christian, to find that the doctrines of that revelation which he has embraced, are perfectly agreeable to the natures of things, and the reason of his own mind.

The excellency and immortality of the soul, will then most evidently appear, by considering the capacities of it, arising from its own nature; and from the frame and nature of the human soul, it is most certain that it must be a simple, uncompounded, indivisible substance. All matter is evidently composition, and every part of it, an endless combination, or heap of substances; and by consequence,

is necessarily liable to dissolution and corruption. For the particles whereof it consists, are always subject to disunion and separation; and hence it is, that every system of matter, sooner or later, moulder away. But that the soul is not thus compounded, is manifest from all its perceptions and operations; from whence it clearly follows, that it is and must be incorruptible. But this will more fully appear, by considering the excellence of those powers and faculties, which God has given it. And,

i. The soul is endued with the perception of sense; which enables man to discover that order, that proportion, that beauty, of which no inferior creature, appears to have the least idea. Hence he becomes a fit spectator of God's works, and is so far capable of beholding and admiring the wonders of the creation. Hence he enjoys the pleasure of extended views, and spacious prospects; and can entertain himself with all the varieties of art and nature. He can lift up his eyes to the heavens, and survey the glories of the firmament: discovering there and in all places, abundant matter for the exercise and employment of his highest faculties. The soul or mind of man is also endued with the powers of imagination and memory. Man has both an active and passive memory: He can for the most part recollect at pleasure whatever he has seen; review those objects he has been contemplating; and even alter and diversify them as he pleases. He can enlarge, or diminish, divide or compound them, without measure, and without end. He can frame innumerable images that he never saw, and as it were create to himself, an infinity of conceptions, that exist in his own mind. And how capacious and comprehensive is human imaginations? what an endless variety of objects is treasured-up in it? how full and fruitful of its own inventions?—and as we justly admire this faculty in us, for the

extent and compass of it, and the variety of its production; so we cannot but take notice, how amazingly quick it is in its perceptions and operations. How soon, and with what ease does the mind bring together the remotest objects, and connect the most distant events! how swiftly does it run thro' the several ages and periods of the world, and carry on its views, from the creation, to the consummation of all things! the imagination is not to be bounded or retarded, by any limits of time, or lengths of space. We can fly in an instant, on the wings of thought, to the uttermost parts of the earth. We can ascend on high, climb the heavens, and soar among the stars. We can travel in an idea, from world to world, from system to system, till our thoughts be quite lost, in contemplating the immensity of God's works. In short, our thoughts are not limited or circumscribed within the bounds of the universal creation; but can pass the utmost confines of matter, and wander on without end, in the unmeasurable regions of empty space. — Every thoughtful man must be astonished, when he reflects on the multiplicity of objects, which are hoarded in his mind, and impressed on his imaginations; to find in himself a power of calling before him, distinct representations of whatever his eyes have beheld, and of framing infinite forms and species, that he never saw or heard of! innumerable scenes both natural and artificial, continually entertaining the mind, thro' every stage and period of life. This is so familiar to us, that we are apt to take little notice of it, and not rightly estimate such a privilege; and yet however we may neglect or overlook this, it clearly discovers the unspeakable power and wisdom of God.

2. But the mind of man possesses still higher, more valuable, and more excellent powers; even the most divine gift of *reason* or *intelligence*; which exalts

exalts us into our maker's likeness, enables us to imitate a being of infinite perfection, and is the chief distinction, the glorious prerogative of a human soul. 'Tis by this faculty, that we discover causes and effects, find out the ends and uses of things, and apprehend their properties, relations, and consequences; comparing objects together, observing their various connections and dependences, and how one thing infers, and follows another. This faculty of the mind enables us to cultivate arts and sciences, invent languages, form societies, enact laws, establish governments, and maintain correspondence over the face of the earth. By it we launch out into the boundless ocean of truth, and return laden with treasures of knowledge; by it, we commit our thoughts to writing, communicate them at a distance, and transmit them to posterity. By our reason it is, that we discern right and wrong, good and evil; are capable of regulating our thoughts, words and actions, and improving our minds in wisdom and virtue: That we distinguish between matter and spirit, between our souls and bodies, and find the one is destined to dust, and the other to immortality. Hence it is that we believe the existence of innumerable orders and degrees of superior spirits, exalted far above us in power and capacity, and approaching near in resemblance to the great original. And by our reason it is, that we can discover and demonstrate the existence of a God, learn his will, and adore his adorable attributes, and spotless perfections: That we become acquainted, *with the majesty of his kingdom, and the greatness of his excellency; before whom all the inhabitants of the earth, all powers and principalities are reputed as nothing;* so that we have abundant cause to admire him in all his works, and in all his ways, and every where to behold the marks and footsteps, of infinite power, wisdom and goodness.

Having thus considered those faculties of the soul which may be called its perceptive powers, I will next take notice of its *liberty*, or freedom of will. By this faculty we move our bodies and exert the operations of our minds; and find, that our thoughts, words, and actions, are in a great measure at our own disposal. As we readily move our limbs, tho' we cannot comprehend the laws of motions; so we freely command our thoughts, tho' we know not how such power is exerted. But every moment's experience assure us, that we have it. We say to one thought *go, and it goeth; and to another come and it cometh.* And the same freedom we have in respect of our words and actions, which equally depend on the determinations of our minds and wills. We are entrusted with the guidance and government of ourselves, and the reins are put into our own hands. And being thus constituted masters of ourselves, and our own conduct, and endued with suitable talents and powers, we are justly answerable for the discharge of this important trust. Whoever does amiss, the fault is his own, *and sin lieth at his door.* A man may indeed so far lose this liberty, as to *become the servant of sin*, and a slave to his lusts and passions; but then this bondage is his own choice, he is a slave of his own making. Men may doubtless abuse or impair any of their faculties; they may dull their senses, defile their imagination, corrupt their understandings, or shackle their wills; but this, so far from being an argument against the freedom of our will, is a proof of it. — This short and imperfect sketch of the powers of human nature, may suffice to convince us, of the peculiar excellency and dignity of the soul, even without producing other arguments that might be brought in support of it.

As we know not what powers belong to superior spirits, nor to what heights and dignities they are exalted,

exalted, we cannot presume to give a description thereof. But as God has formed man after his own image, made him but a little lower than angels, and crowned him with glory and honour. Psal. 8. 5. may it not be allowable to magnify and extol human nature. Such a resemblance, such an alliance, demands our peculiar attention, our highest regards, and most joyful acknowledgment. Tho' one part of us, be only dust and ashes, the other part, partakes of a heavenly original, and claims kindred with the angels. Have they immaterial and incorruptible substances? so have we. Have they reason, intelligence, liberty? so have we. Are they qualified to worship the creator, to admire his works, and enjoy him for ever? so are we.—So that the excellency of the soul, is a doctrine well grounded and sufficiently supported; and it is our duty to make a proper use of it. In order thereto, I shall point out such influences and conclusions, as naturally flow from it. And in the

First place, from the dignity of human nature, we may justly presume, setting aside other proofs, that this life is not the whole of our existence; but that we are destined to live again in another state. A being so curiously framed, so richly adorned, so nobly endowed, so fearfully and wonderfully made, as the soul of man appears to be, cannot surely be confined by its maker, to that short span which is here allotted us. Such a being can never be intended to pass away like a shadow, and after the term of a few years, expire and perish for ever. If this were our case, why was there such a waste of workmanship? whence is it, that our talents and endowments are thus disproportioned to our conditions? to what end was the divine image planted in us? can such excellent powers and sublime faculties, be given us merely for the purposes of this vain and transitory state? can it be supposed, that man, after he has

been tossed a little while on the billows of a tempestuous world, should immediately sink into utter oblivion? is it to be imagined that a race of creatures thus furnished, and fitted out, should only rise and vanish like bubbles in a storm? if death makes an utter end of us; if our souls are to *fade as leaves, and be cut down as flowers in the field;* why are we made little lower than the angels, and crowned with glory and honour. Psal. 8. 5. Had mankind nothing to expect beyond the grave, their best faculties would be a torment to them; and the more considerate and virtuous they were, the greater concern and grief they would feel, from the shortness of their prospect. When a man had greatly improved his mind by a pious contemplation of his maker, and a diligent study of his nature and his works; how deeply would it afflict him, to consider, that in a short time he must be stript of those glorious ideas, and lose both them and himself for ever! but every wise and good man may have the satisfaction of assuring himself, that this will not be his fate; for surely there is a reward for the righteous, and his expectations shall not be cut off. But,

Secondly, endued with such powers, and blessed with such prospects, we ought ever to maintain a deep sense of our maker's bounty and goodness, and to be continually acknowledging our obligations to him, with the utmost gratitude, sincerity, and veneration. Nothing is more manifest, than that we are bound to be thankful in proportion to the gifts, that we have received. And it plainly appears from the foregoing account, how immensely we are indebted to God!—To be constituted moral agents, crowned with liberty and understanding; to bear the signature of God's image, and be qualified for the glories of a blessed immortality, are advantages and privileges inestimable, and above all price. As such, they deserve and require suitable acknowledgements,

ledgments, and the most solemn thanksgivings; we ought continually to be extolling our supreme benefactor, and to have his great goodness in constant remembrance. *To give thanks for his unspeakable gifts; to praise him for his marvellous works; who hath crowned us with mercy and loving kindness, and made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.*

Thirdly, not only in our thoughts, not only with our lips, but in our lives and actions, and thro' the whole course of our conduct, is our gratitude to appear. Since God has made us intelligent and free; capable of knowing and serving our creator; we are bound in duty to behave accordingly. More particularly it is incumbent on us, to be exceedingly careful that we abuse not God's gifts; that we do not pervert the noble faculties which he has given us, nor prostitute them to the purposes of sin and folly. When God has fixed us in so high and happy a situation, fitted us for a state yet more glorious and blessed, as well as more durable; when he has placed us near to the angels, and prepared for us in common with them, a glorious immortality; what can be more ungrateful, what more unworthy, what more stupid, than wilfully to debase and level ourselves with the beasts that perish? what greater indignity can we offer to the author of our beings, than to be thus regardless of the honour he has done us, and the happiness he has offered us? than to riot in his blessings, and rebel against his goodness? to deface as far as we can, his sacred image, and drown our rational powers in intemperance and sensuality? we cannot be ignorant that they were given us, not to administer to our lusts, and appetites, but to direct and govern them: And if we suffer these to give law to our reason, so far from maintaining the dignity of our nature, we shall fall into a state,

state, lower and more abject, than brutes themselves. Those creatures which have not understanding, must necessarily be actuated by inferior principles: But for moral agents, to forsake the light of reason, and to follow the impulse of blind passions, is the highest affront to their maker, and the greatest injury to themselves. Such a proceeding quite confounds the order of nature, transforms a man into a brute, and buries all his honours in the dust.

Fourthly, Whatever talents God commits to our trust, whether internal or external, he expects an account from us. The higher human nature is exalted, and the nearer it approaches to that of angels, the greater obligations men are under, to exert their several capacities; it being the rule both of reason and revelation, that to *whomsoever much is given, of them shall much be required*. And since God has favoured us with such valuable powers, we cannot neglect the improvement of them, without great dishonour to the donor, as well as great detriment to ourselves. And indeed, our welfare both here and hereafter much depends on our careful endeavours in this important affair. For happiness is the natural result of a due use and exercise of our faculties. Hence flow the inestimable advantages of wisdom and virtue, which infinitely outweigh all outward good, however various and abundant. Even this life consisteth not in the abundance of such possessions, the principal comforts and enjoyments of which are of a different nature. And as to futurity, no other preparation, no other provision, can avail us. The joys of heaven, whatever they are, can rest on no other foundation; since without virtue no man can be qualified for them. So that the improvement of our talents is a matter of a great and eternal consequence. Our future felicity depends upon it; and every

every degree of bliss, will be in proportion to such improvement.

Lastly, Are we then designed for immortality, and fitted with suitable faculties, for an endless duration? how grateful a sense ought we to have, what tributes of praise and thanksgivings are due, for such mighty blessings? the best and most acceptable expression of our gratitude, will be to make a wise and proper use of these mercies; to walk worthy of the high expectations, and the glorious prospect, which God has set before us; and to demean ourselves in such manner, as becomes those, who are *made little lower than the angels*, and with them destined for immortality; that by a diligent application to wisdom and virtue, we may improve and prepare our minds for eternity. On our conduct here depends all our success hereafter. If by evil practices and vicious habits, we lay the foundations of a miserable futurity, our joy will be turned into grief, and the greatest blessings into the saddest curse. In the next life vice and virtue will each produce its own natural effects. Every vice and evil habit that we carry with us, in another world, will, like an evil spirit, haunt and persecute us to all eternity. No friends, no furies, will be able to torment men hereafter like sin and guilt; the rage and remorse of which no words can represent, no thoughts conceive. On the other hand, every grace, every virtue, every good habit, will enlarge our capacities for happiness, and prepare us for it. And how blessed must that immortality be, where every thing within, and without us, conspires to increase and establish the felicity of the righteous?

Since then there will be another life, and that an eternal one, let us not be immoderately solicitous, about the vain and transitory enjoyments of this world; and neglect the joys and glories of a blessed immortality. What are hours, days, and years,

years, nay, time itself, in comparison of an eternal duration? this life can bear no proportion to the next; and yet we suffer it almost to engross our thoughts and affections. We regard this short span of time, as if it was eternity; and we value eternity as mere nothing. But if the greatest and most durable happiness we are capable of wishing, be allowed to merit our attention and regard, then have we just cause to bend our thoughts, and devote our endeavours to the attainment of it. Our true interest prompts us, to withdraw our affections from the fleeting shadows of this life; and exhorts us to moderate our pursuits of *things temporal*, that we finally *lose not the things which are eternal.*

DISCOURSE VI. ABB. TILLOTSON.

The great duties of natural religion.

Micah 6. 8.

*What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justice,
to love mercy, and walk humbly with thy God.*

ONE of the most successful attempts made on religion, by the devil and his instruments, hath been to set the laws of God at variance with themselves, and under pretence of advancing instituted and revealed religion, to undermine and destroy that which is natural and of primary obligation; directly contrary to what our Saviour said *, *I will have mercy, and not sacrifice.* The meaning of whose words is, that the ritual, positive, or instrumental

parts

* Mat. 9. 13.

parts of religion, are of less value and esteem with God, than those of a *moral* nature, especially the great duties of piety and humanity, the *love of God and of our neighbour*. And the reason is plain, because natural and moral duties, are approved by God for their own sakes, on account of their own natural intrinsick goodness; but the ritual and instrumental parts of religion, are only pleasing to God, in order to promote the other in us. They are not naturally good in themselves, but are instituted and appointed by God, for the sake of natural and moral duties, and therefore ought to give way to them, when they come in competition with one another. It shall be my present busines to prove, that natural religion is the foundation of instituted and revealed religion. And that no revealed or instituted religion was ever designed to take away, or abolish the obligations of natural duties, but was intended to establish and confirm them.

As for the first, all religion supposes and takes for granted, the clear and undoubted principles of natural religion. By natural religion, I mean, obedience to the natural law, and the performance of such duties, as natural light, without any express and supernatural revelation, dictates to men. As, that we should believe all God's revelations, depend on him, implore his aid and assistance in all our necessities and distresses, and acknowledge our obligations to him, for all the blessings and benefits which we receive; that we should moderate our appetites, as to the pleasures and enjoyments of this world, and use them temperately and chastely; that we should be just and upright in all our dealings, true to our word, faithful to our trust, and act by others, as we would they should act by us; that we should be kind and charitable, merciful and compassionate, ready to do good to all, and not only to pity, but relieve if we can, the miserable and necessitous.

cessitous. These, and such like particulars, are what we call moral duties; and they are of eternal obligation, because they naturally oblige men, without any express revelation from God. And these great and fundamental duties are the foundation of revealed and instituted religion; for all revelation from God supposes us to be men, and alters none of those duties, to which they were before naturally obliged.

This will more clearly appear, if we consider the following particulars. First, that the scripture constantly speaks of these moral or natural duties, as the main and fundamental parts of the Jewish religion. Our Saviour told the Jews, that the first and great commandment of the law, was to love the Lord our God with all our heart, and our neighbour as ourselves. Sacrifice, circumcision, and the law of the sabbath, on which the Jews laid great stress, he regarded as things very inconsiderable; and only mentions two *moral* duties, the *love of God and our neighbour*, which are of a natural and perpetual obligation, comprehending all other moral duties. The observation of these, he makes to be the foundation and principal design of the Jewish law, and rebukes the scribes and pharisees, for chiefly regarding ritual observances, to the neglect of moral duties, such as judgment, mercy, and fidelity, which he calls the weightier matters of the law. Secondly, that no instituted or positive parts of religion, were ever acceptable to God, where *moral* duties were neglected; nay, he rejects them with disdain and abhorrence. To what purpose, says God to the Jews, is *the multitude of your sacrifices unto me, who hath required this at your hands, to tread my courts?* bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination to me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is *iniquity, even the solemn meeting;*

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and when ye spread forth your bands, I will hide mine eyes from you; when you make many prayers I will not hear *. And the reason of all this was, because they were defective in moral duties. All external worship and sacrifices, all the reverence for the temple and worship of God, signified nothing, unless they practised moral duties. This was what in the Jewish religion, was only acceptable to God for its own sake. And all instituted religion, that did not promote these, or that was destitute of them, was abominable to God. And under the gospel our Saviour prefers a moral duty, before any gift we can offer to God. *If thou bringest thy gift to the altar, and rememb'rest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.* † But some will ask, whether God prefers goodness and righteousness to men, before his own worship? or requires men to observe the second table of the law, before the first? I answer, no; God only prefers the practice of the moral duties contained in the second table, before any instituted worship, such as sacrifice was; and before obedience to what is merely positive, tho' immediately respecting the worship of God. But if we neglect the duties of the second table, of goodness towards men, God will not accept of our obedience to the first, nor of any act of religious worship that we can perform. Thirdly, that the great design of the Christian religion, is to restore and reinforce the practice of the natural law, or which is the same, of moral duties. And therefore our Saviour begins his first sermon by promising blessedness to the practice of moral duties; such as purity, meekness, righteousness, peaceableness, mercifulness, patience and submission to the will of God, under persecutions and sufferings for righteousness sake.

* Isa. i. 11.

† Mat. 5. 23, 24.

The new testament declares it to be the great design of the gospel, to instruct us in those duties, and engage us to the practice of them. We are commanded to *deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world* *. Again, *pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep ourselves unspotted from the world* †. In Christ Jesus, neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but keeping the commandments of God ‡. By comparing these texts it will appear, that the main thing in christianity, is the practice of *moral* duties; the proper effect of the christian faith, being to produce these virtues in us. Indeed, the great design of the christian religion, of the love of God in giving his son to die for us, whereby he obtained the pardon of our sins and justification by his blood, and of all the threatenings of the gospel, and the assistance promised, is to encourage, and enable us to the practice of *moral* duties. I now proceed to prove, that no revealed or instituted religion was ever designed to take away or abolish the obligations of natural duties, but that it was rather intended to confirm and establish them. This will be evident, if we consider,

I. That all revealed religion requires the practice of natural or moral duties. The first laws God gave the Jews, were the precepts of the moral law. The great business of the prophets was to reprove not so much their defects in the duties of instituted worship, as the breaches of their natural law, by their vices and immoralities; and to threaten them with the judgments of God, if they did not reform and amend. And the *perceptive* part of the gospel, is chiefly *moral*, being comprehended under these

* Titus 2. 11, 5. † Jam. 1. 27. ‡ Gal. 6. 17.

two commandments *the love of God, and our neighbour.* Besides the two sacraments, and praying to God in the name, and thro' the mediation of Jesus Christ, there is very little meerly positive and instituted in the christian religion. 2. That the gospel, which is the most perfect revelation God ever made to mankind, supplies us with the best helps and advantages, for the performance of *moral duties.* It more clearly discovers our duty, offers us the greatest assistance to perform it, and presents us with the most powerful motives to engage us thereto. So that the gospel revelation is far from weakening the obligation of natural duties; but rather greatly confirms, strengthens and enforces the practice of them. 3. That the positive rites and institution of revealed religion, so far from entrenching on the laws of nature, that they were always designed to be subservient to them; and whenever they come in competition, it is the declared will of God, that positive institutions should give way to moral duties. If circumstances are such, that one part of religion must give place, God will have the ritual and instituted parts to give way to what is natural and moral. When the duties of natural religion, and rites of divine institution come in competition, we frequently read in scripture, of God's slighting the latter when compared with the former*. But God no where speaks to the disadvantage of natural duties, nor derogates from them. He never said, he would rather have some rite of religion performed, than that men should do the greatest good, and shew the greatest charity to one another. It was never doubted, whether the Lord would be pleased, if we deal justly with our neighbour, and speak the truth one to another; or if we are kind and tender-hearted, ready to forgive others; or if we be willing to distribute and to give alms to them who are in need. Nay,

* Isa. i. 12.

the scriptures assure us, that with such sacrifices God is well pleased. For charity is the end of the gospel commandment and excels all knowledge, faith and hope. This grace of charity our saviour recommends both by his doctrine and example, as the peculiar law of his religion, the proper mark and character of his disciples, and as what will abide and remain with us in a future state; *for charity never fails.*

From what has been said, it plainly appears, that the christian religion does not abolish or destroy natural and moral duties, more especially those of mercy and goodness, which are so great and considerable a part of religion, that all positive institutions must give way to them. The observance of which can never excuse or justify the violation of the natural law; the precepts whereof are of a primary and indispensable obligation. Natural religion is the foundation of that which is instituted, and therefore to violate any natural duty, for the sake of what is instituted, is for religion to undermine itself. Whoever teaches men so, let them go and learn what that meaneth, *I will have mercy and not sacrifice.*

The ways and methods by which God hath discovered these duties to us, and the obligation of them, are many. First, by a kind of natural instinct, I mean a secret impression on the minds of men, whereby they are naturally inclined to approve some things, as good and fit, and to dislike others, as having a native evil and deformity in them. This I call natural instinct, because it does not seem to proceed so much from the exercise of our reason, as from a natural propensity and inclination. And that these inclinations are precedent to all reason and discourse about them, is evident, in that they as vigorously appear in young persons, as in those of riper years; in the rude and ignorant, as well as in the polished and refined; who have oftentimes as strong impressions of devotion, gratitude, justice,

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and piety, as the wiser part of mankind. A plain indication, that the reason of mankind, is directed by a kind of natural instinct, concerning the good and evil of these things. And tho' this does not equally extend to all the instances of our duty, yet as to the great and essential parts of it, mankind scarce need to consult any other oracle, than the propensions and inclinations of their nature. For instance, whether we ought to reverence the divine nature; to be grateful to those who have conferred benefits on us; to speak the truth; to be faithful to our promise; to restore that which is committed to us in trust; to pity and relieve those that are in misery; and in all things to do to others, as we would have them do to us. And this will further appear, if we consider that men are naturally innocent or guilty to themselves, according to what their actions are. *When the Gentiles, (says the apostle*) which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law, are a law unto themselves, and do shew the effects of the law written in their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts by turns (that is according as they act, well or ill) accusing or excusing them.* There is a secret comfort in innocence, a strange pleasure and satisfaction in being acquitted by our own minds for what we do. And when we contradict these natural dictates, what an uneasiness arises in our minds? when a man does but intend a bad thing, he is as guilty to himself, as if he had committed it. Guilt, is a natural concomitant of heinous crimes, which so soon as a man commits, his spirit receives a secret wound, not to be healed but by repentance. *The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest;* which plainly shews, that the mind of man hath a natural sense of good and evil. *For when we offend against na-*

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* Rom. 2. 14, 15.

ture, our consciences are touched to the quick, and we receive a sting in our souls, which greatly torments us, whenever we reflect on what we have done. The truth of this all men know. We are naturally full of hopes and fears, according to these natural dictates. A good conscience fills us with confidence and good hopes ; it gives ease and security to our minds against the dreadful apprehensions of a future judgment ; but guilt is ever attended with dismal thoughts and melancholy expectations. All these things plainly prove, that men are conscious to themselves, when they act right or wrong.

Secondly, God shews men what is good, by natural reason, both as to the conveniency of things to their nature, and their tendency to our happiness and interest. Reason shews the conveniency of things to our nature. Whatever is agreeable to the design and intention of nature we call, *good*; what is contrary thereto, *evil*. For example: To honour and *love* God. It is natural to honour great power and perfection, and to love goodness. The same as to *gratitude*. It is natural to acknowledge benefits received, and to requite them ; the contrary is monstrous and universally abhorred. And so to be *merciful*. No man who hath not divested himself of humanity, can be cruel and hard hearted to others, without feeling a pain in himself. And reason teaches, that these things tend to our happiness and interest. The notion of good and evil, generally refers to the consequences of things ; and we call that good, which brings some benefit and advantage to us ; that evil, which is likely to produce some mischief and inconvenience ; and by this rule reason discovers to us, what duties are good. For instance. *Piety* towards God, evidently tends to our interest, because it is to make him our friend, on whose favour our happiness depends. *Gratitude*, is a virtue to which did not nature prompt us, our interest would direct us ; for gratefully

gratefully to acknowledge benefits, is the only way to receive more. *Temperance*, is what apparently conduces to our health, which, next to a good conscience, is the most valuable thing in this world ; but the intemperate man is an open enemy to himself, continually assaulting his own life. *Mercy* and *pity* are not more welcome to others, than they are delightful and beneficial to ourselves ; for we not only gratify our own nature and bowels by relieving the miserable, but we provoke others by our example to the like tenderness, and prudently engage their commiseration towards ourselves, should we ever stand in need of it. Our reason will also direct us to be *just*, as the surest way of prospering in this world ; because it gives us reputation, which is a powerful advantage in all the affairs of life. It is also the shortest and easiest way of dispatching business, the plainest and least entangled. For tho' perhaps it is not a method of so suddenly growing rich, as fraud and oppression, yet it is much surer and more lasting. And natural reason not only shews us, that these things are good, but that *the Lord requires them of us.* This God hath fully signified to mankind by the very frame of our natures, and those principles and faculties he has given us ; so that when we act contrary thereto, we disobey the will of our creator, and violate the laws he hath established in our nature, and written on our hearts. Before the revelation of the gospel, the greatest part of mankind had no other law than this. From *Adam* to *Moses*, the world was almost solely governed by the *natural* law ; which seems to be the meaning of that difficult text*, *until the Law, sin was in the world.* That is, before the law of *Moses* was given, men were capable of offending against *some other law*, otherwise sin could not be imputed to them ; for sin is not imputed, where there is no law. But death

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reigned

* Rom. v. 13.

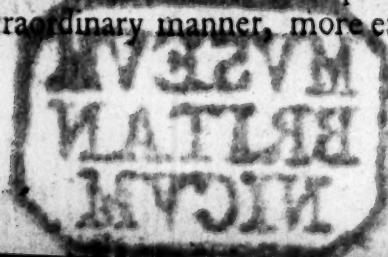


reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned, after the similitude of Adam's transgression. For, during the space from Adam to Moses, men sinned against the natural law, and were liable to death upon that account, tho' they had not offended against any express revelation from God, as Adam had done. This is what the apostle seems to mean, by sinning after the similitude of Adam's transgressions.

Thirdly, God has shewn us what is fit and good, by the testimony and consent of mankind, who in general agree concerning virtue and vice, and the greater duties of piety, justice, mercy, and the like. If we consult the history of all ages, we shall find, that which is chiefly praised in the lives of men, and recommended to the imitation of posterity, are the virtues of piety and devotion, gratitude and justice, humanity and charity; and that the contrary vices are marked with ignominy and reproach. Some vices are so manifestly evil in themselves, and injurious to society, that the laws of most nations disown them by severe penalties; such as murder and adultery, rebellion and sedition, perjury and breach of trust, fraud and oppression. A clear indication, what opinion the generality of mankind, and the wisdom of nations have always had, of these things. But against the contrary virtues, there never was any law. No man was ever punished for living soberly, righteously, and godly; which shews that mankind have ever thought such things good and commendable. And so writes St. Paul, *the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, kindness, fidelity, meekness, temperance, against such there is no law.*

Fourthly, God hath shewn us what is good, by external revelation. In former ages of the world, God revealed his will to particular persons, in an extraordinary manner, more especially to the nation

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of the Jews, the rest of the world being in a great measure left to the conduct of natural light. But in these latter ages he hath made a public revelation of his will by his son. And this, as to our duty, is the same in substance with the law of nature. For our saviour comprehends all under these two general heads, *the love of God, and of our neighbour.* The apostle reduces our duty to these three, *sobriety, justice, and piety.* *The grace of God, that brings salvation, appeared unto all men, teaching us, that denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world.* So that if we believe the apostle, the gospel teaches us the very same things, which nature dictated to men before; only it hath made a more perfect discovery of them. For what was doubtful and obscure before, is now certain and plain; the duties are still the same, only it offers more powerful arguments, and greater assistance to the performance of those duties; so that we may now much better say, than the prophet could, *he bath shewed thee, O man, what is good, and what it is the Lord requires of thee.* Lastly, God shews us what is good, by the motions of his spirit, upon the minds of men. This the scripture assures us of, and good men especially experience it; tho' it is difficult to know what motions are from the spirit of God, and what from our own minds. For as the *wind bloweth where it listeth, and we hear the sound of it, but know not whence it comes, nor whither it goes;* so are the operations of the spirit of God, upon the minds of men, secret and imperceptible.

Since then God hath thus shewn us, what is good, and what he requires from us, how inexcusable shall we be, if we act contrary to the light which he hath afforded us! God hath taken the most effectual methods to direct and engage us to the practice of our duty. We are excited to it by a kind of natural

instinct, and strong impressions on our minds of the difference of good and evil; we are led to the knowledge and urged to the practice of it, by our nature, our reason, and our interest; by the general voice and consent of mankind; by the most powerful and governing passions in human nature, those of hope, fear and shame; by the prospect of advantage, the apprehension of danger, and the sense of honour; and to take away all possible excuse of ignorance, by an express revelation from God, the clearest and most perfect, that was ever made to the world. So that whenever we act contrary to our duty in any of these instances, we offend against them all, and do in the highest degree fall under the heavy sentence of our Saviour, *this is, the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light; and that because their deeds are evil.*

From what has been said, we may learn, what are the great duties of religion, which God chiefly requires of us, and how reasonable they are; namely, piety towards God, justice and charity towards men. The knowledge of these is planted in our nature, and grows up with our reason. These things are undeniably good, and were never reproved, or found fault with, by mankind, nor do the dictates of our nature or reason, ever oppose them; and we have all the obligation, all the encouragement to observe them, and on all accounts are secure in the practice of them. In performing these duties, there is no danger from the laws of men, no fear of God's displeasure, no remorse from our own minds. Things so agreeable to our nature, reason and interest, are the great duties which our religion requires of us; more valuable in themselves, more acceptable to God, than whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. Indeed we are not to neglect any institution of God; but above all things

things we are to secure the observance of these great duties, to which we are directed by our nature, and obliged by the most sacred ties of all laws; I mean, those which God hath impressed on our hearts and minds. And that we might have no pretence left to excuse us from performing these duties; the christian religion hath set us free from those many positive outward observances, with which the Jewish religion was incumbered; that we might be wholly intent on these great duties, and regard nothing so much, as the real substantial virtues of a good life. *God hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; for what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with thy God.*

DISCOURSE VII. Bp. Gibson.

Of the expediency, necessity, and excellency of the gospel revelation.

Act 17. 30.

And the times of this ignorance, God winked at; but now commandeth all men, every where to repent.

THAT a divine revelation was not only expedient, but highly needful, to be a sure guide in matters of religion, appears certain, in that the most successful efforts of meer natural reason, towards the discovery of divine truths, and the duties to be performed by us, with the obligations thereto, were made by the ancient philosophers, but all in vain. And if after all their searches, they could not discover how God was to be worshipped, or sinners reconciled to him; if they could never come to a certain knowledge concerning the immortality of the soul, future rewards and punishments, which

are the principal motives to the performance of our duty; if the difference among the philosophers, about points of the greatest importance in religion, were so many, that instead of informing mankind in their duty, they perplexed and disturbed them, (no one in particular having authority to prescribe a fixed scheme of duty;) if under the direction and discipline of the philosophers, the heathen world, and the generality of persons, for several ages, did actually remain in a state of gross idolatry, as uncleanness, impiety and immorality of all kinds; and this was the real case; it then follows, that mankind must either irrecoverably continue in such a state of ignorance and corruption, or have some divine revelation to assist them.

And in truth, 'tis very absurd to suppose that philosophy, or any thing but divine revelation could do this. The ancient philosophers clearly saw a great degree of darkness and degeneracy, corruption and depravity in the minds of men; but could not find a cure for it; and therefore *Socrates* and *Plato**, two of the greatest of them, despaired of man's recovery out of a state of error and corruption, without some extraordinary assistance from God.

We are then most certainly obliged to enquire, whether any revelation has been made, and what evidences there are of it's coming from God. For if we believe we are the creatures of God, we must think ourselves bound to adore him as our creator, and endeavour to know in what manner he will be worshipped, and the nature of the duty he requires of us. If we believe we are dependent creatures, and need God's favour and protection, we cannot but desire to know, in what way we may most please him, and what are the surest means of obtaining his favour. If we believe, that God governs the world, and that we live under his

* *Plato Apol. Socr. de repub. I. 6.*

his providence, we cannot but desire the best light that is to be had from his own declarations, and the examples of former times, as to the rules of his providence, and the ordinary methods of his dealings with mankind. If we believe a state of future rewards and punishments, according to our behaviour in this life, we cannot but desire to know with the utmost certainty and assurance, how we may secure the one, and avoid the other ; and there can be no certainty of these things equal to what God himself gives. So that while men, out of a zeal for what they call natural religion, are unconcerned whether God has made any revelation of his will or not, they violate the laws of nature in a double respect : first, by resisting that natural impression which has always led men to enquire after the declaration of God's will ; and then, by an obstinate unconcernedness for their own safety and welfare, contrary to the great and fundamental law of nature, self-preservation.

No one who believes there is a God, and that he is a being of infinite power, wisdom, and knowledge, can doubt whether he can make a revelation of his will to mankind, fully attested to come from him, either by miracles, predictions of future events, or other undeniable testimonies of a divine mission ; because this would not only be in effect to deny a God, but to contradict the universal belief that we find in all ages and nations of divine communications with man ; which shews at least the general sense of mankind, as to the possibility of the thing ; and considering the false and very corrupt notions the world had, concerning God and his worship, and the other duties we owe him, it was very agreeable to the natural notions we have of the divine goodness and wisdom, to suppose that he would make a farther revelation to mankind, which might give them a clearer knowledge, and a stronger sense of duty ;

unless we will suppose that he had utterly abandoned them.

They who think it had been most agreeable to the divine wisdom and goodness, to have given mankind one certain rule from the beginning, which should have been a sufficient guide to all future generations, and that the want of a new revelation implies a defect of knowledge and foresight in God, seem to forget that man was created a free agent, and, as such, must have it in his power to do good or evil. And when the generality of men were actually fallen into a state of final corruption, the informing them, by a special revelation, how they might be delivered out of it, and their natures rectified, and themselves restored to the favour of God, this could not surely be any derogation to the infinite characters of goodness and wisdom.

But it may be proper to take notice of the extreme vanity and presumption of those, who think themselves at liberty to disregard the gospel revelation, 'till God shall think fit to satisfy them, why he did not make it sooner, and at once, to all mankind; as if he was accountable to us for his proceedings and dispensations, and we at liberty to refuse the benefits or deliverances he sends, because they come not at a time, or in the manner, that we judge most proper. Such may as well ask, why he made us men, and not angels? Why he did not bring us into the world with the perfect use of our reason? Why he did not give to all men the same capacity and leisure, to know and learn their duty? Why he has appointed different degrees of happiness in the next life? — If indeed God would judge men for the transgression of any duty, which they did not, nor could not know, and make them accountable for not being influenced by motives which he had never acquainted them with; it would be difficult to reconcile such proceeding to the divine justice.

justice. But since the contrary is true, and that God will not punish men for invincible ignorance, surely he is at liberty to dispense *extraordinary favours* at what times, and to what nations and persons he thinks fit; and such are strictly bound to receive them with all the gratitude and thankfulness that is due from creatures to their creator. Are we then to quarrel with God, that he raises us to greater degrees of perfection, in order to advance us to greater degrees of glory? Can there be a more flagrant instance of perverseness, than to *refuse* his favours, for the very reason which ought to increase our thankfulness for them, namely, that he vouchsafes them to us, and not to OTHERS? As to the heathens, tho' the light of reason is but dim, yet they who honestly make use of that, as the only guide God has given them, cannot fail to be mercifully dealt with, by infinite justice and goodness. This is the foundation of † St. Paul's reasoning upon the state of the gentile world, that God did not then leave himself without witness; the regular returns of the seasons of the year, and the former and latter rains coming at their set times, and blessing them with plentiful harvests, were visible evidences of his providence and goodness. And tho' notwithstanding these evidences, they fell into idolatry, yet because those were *times of ignorance* in which they had no other guide than the light of nature, God *winked at*, or bore with them, and did not let loose his vengeance utterly to destroy them; but now (the gospel is published) he commandeth all men every where to repent; because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead. And they who enjoy the clear light of the gospel, who have received this express

command from God, and do perversely reject it; instead of being entitled to mercy, their guilt will be greatly aggravated, by shutting their eyes against the light he has given, and rejecting a dispensation ordained for their salvation, *only* because it is pure and perfect; and refusing the happiness God tenders, for no other reason, but because they will not come up to the terms and conditions on which it is offered.

No less unreasonable are they, who plead, that a revelation ought to be made to every person, and in every age. For a *rule of duty* is one and the same thing to all persons, and in all ages; and when a standing test is once given to distinguish truth from error, it is equally a test at all times, and in all places; supposing it to be conveyed to them with sufficient evidence of its coming from God. And this being the case of the gospel revelation, God having given such evidence as is abundantly sufficient to satisfy an ingenuous and unprejudiced mind, it is very unreasonable to suppose, that he is obliged to make, to every age and country, a scene of new miracles, only to gratify the disingenuity and obstinacy of those, who have already received ample evidence, and yet will not be convinced. Such, *if they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded tho' one rose from the dead* ‡. The spirit of infidelity is proof against all arguments and conviction; and the Jews are a lasting testimony how little it avails to be *eyewitnesses* to miracles, when men have once resolved to be infidels.

Since then a revelation from God is not only possible, but probable, and very agreeable to the divine wisdom and goodness; since we live in a country, which avowedly acknowledges and embraces the *gospel revelation*, and that the same has also been so received

‡ Luke. xvi. 31.

received by many other countries, for above sixteen hundred years, and is the great foundation of men's happiness both temporal and eternal; to say in this case, that men are not obliged, according to their several abilities and opportunities, to enquire whether such a revelation has been really made, and what grounds there are to believe it came from God, is to assert, that they are at liberty to renounce all the rules of reason and prudence, as well as all concern for the safety and welfare of body and soul. And so far from mens being obliged to rest implicitly on the belief of any age or country, they are under the greatest obligation to make a strict enquiry, whether the *gospel revelation* came from God, and to see if the evidences for it are fit for a reasonable and impartial mind to acquiesce in. And if, on examination, the evidences of the fact appear full and strong, and nothing be found in the matter revealed, that is a *manifest contradiction* in itself, or *evidently inconsistent*, either with the divine perfections, or our natural notions of good and evil, then certainly we are bound to receive it as a rule of faith and practice, notwithstanding any colourable suggestions to the contrary; because we are satisfied it comes from God, who has a right to give us a rule, and such as is true, just and good. For the same reason we are not at liberty to admit some *part* of a divine revelation and *reject* the rest; we may not, for instance, receive the improvements it makes in the moral law, and stopping there, *reject* or disregard the method it provides for the redemption of mankind, nor in general, any thing that it requires either to be believed or practised: because, if the whole appears to come from God, then all has equally the stamp of divine authority; and he who *rejects* any part, may, for the same reason, *reject* the whole.

And here, I must caution all against *scepticism*, or an unreasonable difficulty in believing, after proper grounds of conviction. Such scepticks are all they who will not be content with such proof, of which things are capable. As not to believe things done before their own time, because they did not see or hear them, or because they are not proved by mathematical demonstration, of which all historical facts whatsoever are equally incapable. Such also who will believe the history of *Julius* and *Augustus Cæsar* without the least scruple, but are full of doubts about the history of *Jesus Christ*, tho' supported by evidences far more clear and numerous. But those who will pretend such kind of grounds for their disbelief of the gospel, will never be able to persuade others, that the true cause why they do not give their assent, is not because they have no reason for it, but because they have no mind to it.

As to the excellencies of the gospel revelation, they are so many and great, that every wise and good man must wish it to be true; whether we consider the ends it proposes, or the means for attaining those ends. The great ends it proposes are, the perfection of human nature, and the happiness of mankind; to remove us from the state of brutes, and advance us to the perfection of angels; and upon the whole, to lay a sure foundation for our peace and happiness, both temporal and eternal. And the means it uses to attain those great ends are of several sorts: For instance, cruelty and unrestrained enjoyment of sensual pleasures, being the distinguishing characters of the brutal nature, the gospel revelation abounds with prohibitions of anger, malice, hatred, revenge, and the like brutal qualities; and also lays the strongest restraints on sensual pleasures and delights, and strictly forbids the enjoyment of them beyond the bounds of reason. And this

this not only in the outward acts, but also in the inward thoughts, imaginations and desires ; which corrupt the soul, and dispose it to acts of cruelty and uncleanness, whenever provocation or enticements offer ; for nothing so much interrupts and destroys the peace and happiness of our lives, as the indulging untruly lusts and passions. And since next to these, the happiness of this life is greatly impaired by sickness, want, oppression, and many other temporal calamities ; christianity provides for our comfort under all these, not on the principles of the ancient philosophers, namely, "that they are common to mankind, cannot be avoided, and death will put an end to them ;" but by assuring us they come from the hand of a wise and good God, who can and will deliver us from, or support us under them ; and that they are designed by him, to wean us from the delights of this world, and to prepare us for the enjoyment of a much better. Of the like tendency, are the many precepts of the gospel, which command us not to set our hearts on the things of this world, but to pursue them with moderation, indifference, and a constant resignation to the will of God.

And as the precepts of christianity are preparations for a happiness of a very different nature from what worldly enjoyments afford ; and have higher views, and nobler ends than can be attained by meer morality ; it was therefore necessary that the gospel precepts should be built on principles of a more pure, refined, and exalted nature ; and enforced by higher, and more noble motives, than those of morality. Accordingly, Christianity gives us a truer knowledge of the *nature* of God, than what the heathens believed, or the Jewish dispensation discovers ; as that he is a being of a pure spiritual nature, is kind to, and loves to do us good, and has given the highest proof thereof, by sending

sending his own son, to die for us, and redeem us from eternal death; thereby to engage our love and obedience to him, and procure to ourselves eternal happiness. Christianity informs us, that God must not be worshipped according to the impure rites of the heathen service, nor yet by the sacrifices of beasts, which were only *types* of our redemption by *Christ*; but with a steady attention of the soul, a pure heart, sincere intentions, and resolutions of obedience; which our saviour briefly expresses, by worshipping God in *spirit and truth*; and which has a natural tendency to fit us for the divine exercises of praise and contemplation in the next life, and is a means of preserving a constant communication between God and us, during our continuance in this world.

To the same *spiritual* ends tend all the duties of life; which by the christian institution are carried to greater degrees of purity and perfection. Such are, with regard to *ourselves*, holiness of heart, a sober use of the enjoyments of life, an indifference about the things of this world, compared with our care about the things of the next; the *seeking those things which are above*; the having *our conversation*, and *laying up our treasure in heaven*, and the keeping a strict watch over our *thoughts*, as well as actions. With regard to our *neighbour*, the forgiveness of injuries, the loving of enemies, the doing all the good we can for God's sake, the blessing them that curse us, the praying for them that despitefully use and persecute us, and the overcoming evil with good. The precepts which relate to *ourselves* prepare us for heaven, as a place of pure *spiritual* enjoyments; and those which relate to our neighbour, prepare us for it, as a place where love, peace, and unity reign, to the greatest degree, and in the highest perfection. The outward rites and ordinances in our saviour's institution are only two,

two, and those very plain and significant; *Baptism*, by which we are admitted into the society of *Christians*, and all the advantages of it; and the *Lord's Supper*, by which we declare our continuance in that society; thankfully commemorating the great work of our redemption by *Christ*, and applying to ourselves the comforts and benefits of it; and at the same time resolving to live as becomes his disciples, and also thereby receiving spiritual strength to support us in that resolution.

And because we are not naturally disposed to spiritual exercises, and that our thoughts are too much employed about the business or pleasures of this world; therefore the gospel hath appointed a *public worship*, which every christian is bound to attend, and a peculiar order of men, to explain to the people their duty, remind them of it, and enforce the several obligations they are under to perform it. And since the passions and appetites of men lead them strongly to sensual gratifications and delights, and the self-denials which the gospel requires are so disagreeable to weak and corrupt nature, that 'tis in vain to hope mankind will be kept to their duty in either of these respects, by meer reasoning and exhortation; the gospel hath therefore appointed a balance to our natural weakness and corruption, by giving us the strongest assurances of rewards and punishments in another world; the one to deter us from gratifying our unruly passions and inordinate affections; and the other to influence and allure us to discharge whatever duties the gospel requires.

And as the love of God is the highest principle of duty and obedience to him, so the gospel gives us the strongest and most forcible motives to love him; namely, the sending his own son into the world to die for us, and by his death to reconcile us to himself, and make us eternally happy. And as in all cases *example* has a very powerful influence,

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in order to practice ; we have, in our saviour's life, the most perfect pattern of goodness, that ever the world beheld ; of meekness and humility, patience and contentment, of loving to do good to men, and of an entire obedience and submission to God's will.

And because the sense of our natural corruption and infirmity, might well discourage us from attempting to live up to the pure and spiritual precepts of the gospel ; therefore the same gospel ensures a *supernatural assistance* to all those who shall desire and pray for it, to support them against temptations, and preserve in their minds a constant desire and endeavour to live agreeably to the laws of Christ. For our *heavenly father will give* the holy spirit to *them that ask him* ; by which spirit, our natures are *renewed*, our hearts *sanctified*, and we are *strengthened with might* in the *inner man* †.

Lastly, because men, conscious of their manifold offences against God, and of their great failings and infirmities, would be in perpetual dread of the divine justice, and think themselves unworthy to approach a being of infinite purity, and despair of recovering his favour after having offended him ; therefore to comfort sincere christians, and encourage them to persevere in their duty, the son of God, who took our nature on him, hath satisfied the divine justice, by dying for us, and is appointed the intercessor between God and man, and the mediator of a new covenant ; by which, all who sincerely desire and endeavour to perform their duty, are not only assured of supernatural assistance to enable them to discharge it, but also, upon a sincere repentance and faith in him, are entitled to pardon and forgiveness if they transgresſ therein, and shall be restored to the favour of God, and the comfortable hope of eternal life.

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(† Luke 11, 13. Rom. 12, 2. Eph. 3, 16.

The account given in the new testament, of the redemption wrought for us by *Christ*, is, that his death made satisfaction to the divine justice for the sins of mankind ; that thro' faith in him, we are assured of the forgiveness of our sins, on repentance and amendment ; that being forgiven, we are justified in the sight of God, and reconciled to him ; that he who reconciles us to God, *sanctifies* our hearts by the holy spirit, to enable us to perform God's will, and thereby continue in his favour ; that for the same end he mediates and interceeds for us with God, while we are in this life ; and, that thro' him, we have the promise of life eternal.

+ *He laid down his life, and died for our sins. He gave himself for us, and was delivered for our offences. He was once offered to bear the sins of many. The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was manifested to take away our sins, by the sacrifice of himself. He hath washed us from our sins in his own blood. He is the propitiation for our sins, and also for the sins of the whole world. He is the mediator of the new covenant, and makes intercession for us at the right hand of God. If any man sin, we have an advocate with the father, Jesus Christ the righteous. Eternal life is the gift of God, thro' Jesus Christ our lord, who is the author of eternal salvation to all that obey him.*

This is a short view of the christian institution, both in the ends it proposes, and the means for attaining those ends ; from whence it appears, that the method which the gospel lays down for our salvation, is throughout a consistent and uniform scheme, worthy of God, and contrived with the greatest wisdom and goodness, for the comfort and hap-

+ 1 John 3, 16. Cor. 15, 3. Heb. 9, 26. Isai. 53, 4, 6. 1 John 3, 5. Heb. 9, 26. Rom 5, 10. Heb. 10, 10. Heb. 12, 24. Rom. 8, 34. Heb. 7, 25. Rom. 6, 23. Heb. 5, 9.

happines of man. But if after God has made so full and clear a revelation, how and upon what terms he will save us, men will resolve to be their own guides, and refuse to be saved in the way he has appointed ; this is at their own peril. If some will believe, that trusting in *Christ* is their whole duty, and so excuse themselves from the observation of the moral law, and others will affirm that to observe the moral law is sufficient, without the benefit of *Christ's* redemption ; if some will contend that *Christ* has done all, and others that he has done nothing : all such are very vain and presumptuous, in setting up the imaginations of weak and fallible men, against the infallible testimony of persons sent and inspired by God. The gospels account is as full and express as words can make it ; on one hand, that faith in *Christ* is the foundation of a christian's *title* to heaven ; and on the other hand, that repentance and good works are necessary conditions of obtaining it.

To conclude ; when we consider the strength and clearness of the evidences of christianity, with the advantages and excellencies of the gospel institution, and the strict restraints it lays on excess and uncleanness of all kinds, we cannot in reason ascribe the cause of infidelity to any thing but the love of vice, or the spirit of contradiction ; and where this is the case, infidelity is a sin of the highest nature ; as it corrupts the reason and understanding which God has given, and subjects it to base and unworthy influences ; as it degrades human nature, and carries in it an *indifferency* whether we be immortal, or die like beasts ; as it is an affront to God, in rejecting his messengers, who came with clear and evident testimonies of their being sent by him ; as it makes him a lyar, and is a manifest contempt of his goodness in sending a revelation, and defeats his gracious designs and measures

fures for the salvation of mankind. But to shew the infidels of our age that to believe, or not believe, is far from being a matter of indifference, and to convince those who are in danger of being seduced by them, how nearly they are concerned to give the evidences of christianity an impartial examination, let me recommend to them, the following queries as tests of their sincerity. “Whether they find their hearts sincerely disposed to embrace any doctrine, and follow any rule of life that shall appear to come from God?” “Whether they inwardly wish to find a religion well founded, which provides a remedy for the corruptions of our nature, and ensures to good men a state of happiness and immortality after this life?” “Whether they find in themselves no lust, vice or passion which inclines them to wish that such a religion as the christian is, may not be well founded?” Would men be serious as to examine their hearts in these particulars, I am fully persuaded there is not the least danger, that infidelity would ever take place.

DISCOURSE VIII. Abp. Tillotson.

The sufficiency of scripture evidence.

Luke 16. 13.

If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded tho' one rise from the dead.

IN the conclusion of that excellent parable of our Saviour, concerning the rich man and Lazarus, we have Abraham's final answer to the rich man's request,

request, that he would send Lazarus to his five brethren, to prevent their coming to that place of torment where he was; Abraham saith unto him, they have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them. And when this would not satisfy the rich man's importunity, who said to Abraham, that if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent; then Abraham absolutely denies the probability of convincing by a messenger from the dead, any who reject a public credible revelation of God. And such is the holy scripture.

But it should be observed, that the words of Abraham, are not to be too strictly taken, and so as if it was impossible for a man, who is not convinced by what Moses and the Prophets say, to be brought any other way to repentance; since it is very possible, in the nature of the thing, that a man may be convinced by a strange, and amazing accident, when he could not be by calm evidence and persuasion. Should one whom we know, appear from the dead, and declare the certainty of a future state, and the condition of things there, this would no doubt more rouse and awaken us to consideration, than all the threatenings of God's word. Nor are we so to understand these words, as to weaken the force of that argument which is taken from miracles, for the proof and confirmation of a divine doctrine; since our Saviour does not oppose Moses and the prophets to a miraculous testimony, but only advances their testimony above a single and private miracle; for Moses and the prophets, had their confirmation from miracles, and which are the great evidence used by God, to attest the divinity of any person or doctrine. These two things premised by way of caution; I shall proceed to prove that it is unreasonable to expect, God should do more for the conviction of men, than to afford a standing revelation of his mind and will; such as

is the holy scripture, and that there is little probability of convincing those, who reject this public revelation of God, though one should speak to them from the dead.

Indeed it is very unreasonable to expect that God should do more for the conviction of men, than to afford them a standing revelation of his mind and will; such as is that of the holy scriptures. This is implied in Abraham's first answer, *they have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them;* and having such means of conviction, they ought not to expect or desire more. It is with the scriptures, as with God's providence; God does not generally by extraordinary instances of power, and by changing the course of nature convince men, that he governs the world; but God sufficiently satisfies considerate men of his care and government of the world, by the standing testimonies of his wisdom, power, and goodness. Tho' he seldom manifests himself in supernatural ways, yet he leaves not himself without witness, by the constant course of nature, in the returns of day and night, in the revolutions of the seasons of the year, and in *that he gives us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.* These instances of his providence, tho' not much regarded, because common, are yet daily miracles, and we should be amazed at them, were they not frequent and familiar. And its the same as to divine revelation. God hath not thought fit to gratify the perverse curiosity of men, by affording to every particular person, a separate and immediate revelation of his mind and will; but he gives us a revelation that had at first, the greatest and most miraculous confirmation, and still affords us sufficient means of being assured of its truth; and therefore to require extraordinary signs, when we receive so

so abundant satisfaction, in an ordinary way, is most unreasonable.

But it is very probable, that those who reject this public revelation from God, would not be effectually convinced, if one should speak to them from the dead ; *If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded ; tho' one rose from the dead.* For tho' it would startle and amaze a man, should one come from the dead, to warn him of the danger of his wicked life ; yet most likely they who obstinately refuse to be convinced by *Moses and the prophets*, would not be persuaded to repent and reform their lives, *did one actually rise from the dead.*

Because if such miracles, as a messenger from the dead to admonish men of their faults, were frequent and familiar, this would probably have but little effect ; and unless they were common and ordinary, we could have no reason to expect them at all ; it being unreasonable for perverse and obstinate sinners to expect this, as a peculiar favour, when God does not so much for others who more deserve it. And if these things were common, men in all probability would not be much moved by them. Indeed, while the apprehensions of such things were present, some good resolutions might be formed, as sinners usually do, when the hand of God, by sickness or other great affliction, lies heavy on them : But after their fears were abated, they would be apt to defer their repentance, and return to their former course. This is the more probable, from what we observe, in other similar cases. To see a man die, and solemnly take his last leave of the world, is a very terrible amazing thing. The circumstances of dying men, strike us with horror. To hear how sensibly such a man will speak of another world ; how severely condemn the folly and wickedness of his past life ; how passionately wish

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he had served God better ; how sincerely resolve to live otherwise, would God restore his health to him ; and how earnestly he recommends a virtuous and religious life, to his best friends and nearest relations. Such discourses as these, are very apt to move and effect men for a time, and excite good resolutions while the impression remains ; but these sights being frequent, they seldom have any lasting, permanent effect. And were apparitions from the dead as common as for men to die, we may reasonably presume, that the discourse of those who come from the dead, would have no greater influence than that of dying men. And if it was only a singular case, then the consequence would be, that a man who is strongly addicted to his lusts, and unwilling to leave them, when the sight of an apparition was over, would be induced to believe, that all was meerly the effect of fancy and imagination, because the same thing happened not to others as well as himself.

But we have as great reason to believe the threatenings of God's word, as the discourse of any one that comes from the dead. For as sins against nature are discovered by the natural guilt and fears of men, and that every man's conscience gives testimony thereto ; so we have a credible relation of great and unquestionable miracles wrought on purpose to give testimony to those persons, who denounced the threatenings in God's word, and that they came from him. A method more suitable to the generality of mankind, and of greater authority than any private apparition, or single miracle ; and if the one will not convince men, there is no reason to suppose the others would.

The same reason which makes men reject the counsels of God, in his word, would probably hinder them from being convinced by an apparition from the dead. It is not want of evidence, that men do not

not believe God's word, and obey it, but it arises from the interest of some beloved lust; it is not because they want reason to satisfy themselves that the scriptures are the word of God; but it proceeds from the obstinacy of their wills, enslaved to their lusts. the being addicted to some sort of vice, makes men unwilling to entertain those truths which check and controul them in their pursuits of it. *Light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil; for every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh he to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.* Men resist the doctrine of the holy scriptures, not because they have sufficient reason to doubt of their divine authority, but because they are unwilling to conform their lives to the laws and precepts of that holy book. Men hate to be reformed, and this makes them *cast the laws of God behind their backs*; and if God should speak to them from heaven, as he did to the people of *Israel*, yet would they continue a *stiffnecked and rebellious people*. Tho' the evidence was such as mens understandings could not resist, yet their wills would still hold out, to prevent its influence on their hearts and lives.

So long as men retain a strong affection for their lusts, they will break thro' all conviction, resist all evidence, to delude themselves; and they require more evidence, not because they want it, or are willing to be convinced, but only to excuse themselves for not being convinced, by the evidence which is already amply afforded them.

Experience abundantly testifies, how ineffectual extraordinary methods are to reclaim men, whose minds are depraved and obstinately addicted to their lusts. We read in our bible what wonders were wrought in the fight of *Pharoah* and the *Egyptians*! yet they were hardened against all those plagues. *Balaam, who greedily followed the wages of unrighteousness,*

ness, was not to be stopt by the admonition of an angel. The Jews, after so many miracles as they had seen, continued a stiff-necked and gainsaying people; and when the son of God did among them the works that never man did, enough to convince the worst of people, yet they repented not; nay, what the rich man requested of Abraham for his brethren, was done among them; for Lazarus did rise from the dead, and testified unto them, yet, they were not persuaded; and our Saviour himself, agreeable to his prediction whilst living, rose again from the dead the third day, and was visibly taken up into heaven; and yet how few did believe, and give glory to God? so that the very thing mentioned by Abraham, was made good in a famous instance; they who believed not Moses and the prophets, which testified of the Messias, were not persuaded of the truth, tho' he rose from the dead; and our own experience tells us the very same. How frequently may we observe men, after great afflictions, tedious sufferings, and dangerous sicknesses, returning to their former evil courses! tho' they have been on the brink of eternity; and the terrors of death have compassed them about, and the pains of hell have almost taken bold of them; tho' they have had as lively and sensible convictions of another world, as if they had spoken with one come from thence, or had been there themselves; yet this has not warned them, but on their deliverance and recovery, they have been as great sinners as before. We therefore need not wonder, that if men bear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, tho' one rose from the dead. Especially, if we consider, that the doctrine of salvation contained in the holy scriptures, and the promises and threatenings of God's word, are the ordinary means which God hath appointed for the conversion of men, and to bring them to repentance; and if we sincerely use these

means, we may reasonably expect the concurrence of God's grace to make them effectual. But if we neglect and resist them, presuming that God will reclaim us by some extraordinary method; tho' he should gratify our vain curiosity, and send *one from the dead to testify unto us*, yet we have no reason to expect the assistance of his grace, to make such conviction effectual to our repentance; when we have so long despised his word, and resisted his spirit, which are *the power of God unto salvation*. Without his grace and assistance, the most probable means will prove ineffectual to alter and change our corrupt natures; *by grace we are saved, but not of ourselves, it is the gift of God*. This grace is revealed, and the assistance of it conveyed to us, in and by the gospel; and it is very presumptuous to expect it any other way, than what God hath promised. And thus it plainly appears how unlikely it is, that those who obstinately reject a clear and public revelation of God, should be effectually convinced and brought to repentance by any apparitions from the dead.

Since then the scriptures contain the will of God, and are the ordinary means of salvation, it from hence appears, that people ought to have them in a language they can understand. This our favourer plainly supposes, in the discourse he represents between *Abraham*, and the rich man, as to *Lazarus*'s going to *his brethren to testify unto them*; for *Abraham* would not have answered, *they have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them*, had he imagined the scriptures were ever to be locked up from the people, in an unknown tongue; it not being possible for men to hear and be persuaded by what they cannot understand. According to the reasoning of this parable, our Saviour takes it for granted, that the holy scriptures are the standing and ordinary means of bringing men to faith and repentance, and free

free for the use of all. But the church of *Rome*, finding a great inconvenience in this, has since taken the scriptures from the people. They will not let them hear *Moses and the prophets*, the gospel of our blessed Saviour, and the writings of his apostles; being afraid, lest by hearing them, they should be convinced and persuaded of the errors and corruptions of their church; but instead of the scriptures, they would impose a legend of famous apparitions of men from the dead, testifying unto them, concerning purgatory and transubstantiation, the worship of the blessed virgin, and the saints, the great benefit of purgatory by the pope's indulgence, and prayers to saints and angels on their behalf. So that in the church of *Rome*, men are persuaded of their religion, articles of faith, and way of worship, not by *Moses and the prophets*, not by the doctrine of the holy scriptures, (for they testify against them) but by absurd romances, and ill-contrived fictions of apparitions from the dead,

Let us then hear and obey that publick revelation of God's will, which in so much mercy to mankind he hath been pleased to afford us. This great advantage the world was destitute of for many ages, having no other guide to conduct them to eternal happiness, but the light of nature, and a particular revelation which God sometimes vouchsafed them. But now God hath established a great and standing light in the world, in the holy scriptures; and by the gospel of his blessed son, hath given the knowledge of salvation to all men, for the remission of their sins, thro' the tender mercies of God, whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sat in darkness, and in the shadow of death, and to guide our feet in the way of peace; to convince us of the error of our ways, and to direct us in our duty. We upon whom the ends of the world are come, do enjoy all the advantages of divine reve

velation, which the world ever had, or ever shall have, for God, in these last days, hath spoken unto us by his son; and if we will not hear him God will send no other extraordinary prophet and messenger to us ; if the wrath of God, so clearly revealed from heaven by the gospel of our blessed Saviour, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men ; if the terror of the great day, and the fear of eternal torments ; if the dreadful sufferings of the son of God for our sins ; the merciful offers of pardon and reconciliation in his blood ; and the glorious hopes of eternal life and happiness, will not prevail with us to leave our sins and, amend our lives, we have no reason to expect God should use any farther means to reclaim us ; and therefore,

Those who are not effectually persuaded and brought to repentance by this clear and publick revelation of God's will to men, in the holy scriptures, have reason to think their case desperate. Besides, to be convinced of a future state only by an apparition (a sight so dreadful and full of terror) discovers a mind strangely hardened, and obstinately bent on a course of wickedness ; in that nothing will deter men from their sins, but what will almost frighten them out of their senses. What a terrible sight would it be to meet one of our departed acquaintance appearing to us ! can imagination paint the dread and horror of such a spectacle ! The rich man, when in hell, seemed sensible of this inconveniency, and therefore did not request to go himself to his brethren, being apprehensive how frightful a sight that would be ; but he desired they might have a more gentle warning, and that Lazarus, who out of Abraham's bosom had seen the miseries of the damned, but enjoyed the state of the blessed, might be sent to testify unto them.

Let us not then tempt God by any such unreasonable demand, who, by the plain declaration of his word, by the voice of his providence, by his mer-

mercies and judgments, speaks to us every day, to repent and turn to him. God also speaks to men by his ministers, who are to deliver the will and pleasure, the counsels and commands of the great God; which, tho' but frail and sinful men, are to be regarded with the most awful attention, for their work's sake. And if we will not take these warnings, can we expect God should send an express messenger from the other world, to certify how things are there; not so much to help the weakness of our faith, as to gratify the perverseness of our infidelity? nor have we any reason to imagine, such an extraordinary method would prove more effectual. For let us *not deceive ourselves*, the same lusts which now hinder men from believing the gospel, would, in all probability, hurry them to a future state of misery, tho' an angel from heaven should stop them in their way; nothing is like to save men, if the revealed will and grace of God do not.

And if we would in earnest be persuaded did *one rise from the dead*; “* why, even this God hath condescended to do for us; there is *one risen from the dead to testify unto us*; for Jesus the son of God, who died for our sins, rose again for our justification, is ascended into heaven, and sets at the right hand of God, to assure us of a blessed resurrection, and glorious immortality. And if this will not satisfy us, there is no reason to think God will farther gratify our curiosity; if we will *not believe him, whom God hath sent*, and to convince us that he hath sent him, did *raise him up from the dead, we shall die in our sins*, and perish in our impenitency. God in great mercy to mankind hath done what is abundantly sufficient to convince all who are of a teachable temper and disposition; but in great wisdom and justice he hath provided no remedy for the wilfully obstinate, intractable and perverse.

For any one then to reject that, which in the nature of the thing itself is of the highest excellence and goodness, is a mark of the greatest depravity and corruption of manners. To despise that which is of the utmost importance to us ; on the due receiving or neglecting whereof, depends the greatest happiness, or the extremest misery our nature is capable of, is folly and stupidity to the highest degree. To slight and reject a gracious proposal of mercy, procured for us by the interposition, and conveyed to us by the hands of a person of the greatest dignity and excellency ; and who, to accomplish it, was forced to endure great sufferings and indignities, is the highest degree of obstinate perverseness. To resist and not be convinced by such proofs, as both in number, strength, and clearness, are the best and greatest evidences that can be expected, or in reason desired, discovers an inexcusable wilful opposition to truth ; and yet all these aggravating circumstances attend the rejecting the gospel.

The stronger the evidence of any truth, the more inexcusable is the opposing it ; and the highest aggravation of this crime is, the continuing to oppose a truth after the best and greatest evidence has been given of it, that the nature of the thing would permit. This is plainly the case of those who reject the gospel, after the undeniable evidences of its truth, by the testimony of God's holy spirit ; which has given a great variety of concurring proofs, to evince the truth of it. In particular, the many prophecies, which from the beginning of the world were dictated by the spirit, concerning the person of our Saviour ; the nature, success, and effects of his doctrine ; the conception of our Lord, by the miraculous operation of the spirit, and the manifold wonders which attended his birth ; the visible descent of the spirit on him at his baptism, accompanied

panied with a voice from heaven, declaring him to be the son of God? the miracles which he wrought on earth, by the spirit of God; his resurrection from the dead, by the power of the same spirit: But above all, that most plentiful effusion of the spirit on the apostles at *Pentecost*, whereby they were endued with power from on high, to preach the gospel with authority and efficacy; being enabled to speak with tongues, and to do greater works than our saviour himself had done. These several testimonies of the spirit of God, contain such demonstrative proof of the truth of the gospel, as leaves them who reject it, capable of no excuse; since they despise the last and greatest means, that could be made use of to convince any one. This last miracle, the gift of tongues to the apostles, was of all others the strongest, and in its nature and circumstances the greatest and most affecting that could be. The greatness of it consisted, in that men of no education spake different languages perfectly and immediately, without any time, study or instruction; neither was there any room for fallacy or deceit therein; since what they did was not in a corner, but publickly in the midst of *Jerusalem*, and in the presence of innumerable witnesses, who were competent judges; being persons of different nations, to whom all the languages the apostles spake were natural; so that they could not be deceived or imposed on. Besides, the apostles were illiterate men, and understood no language, but their mother tongue; — and the strangers who heard them were witnesses, that what they uttered were true and real languages. The testimony therefore of both, made the miracle certain and manifest, and the effect of it was very great; for the same day there were converted above four thousand souls.

Let us then impartially consider the evidences there are for the truth of the gospel, and not ren-

der ourselves inexcusably guilty, by opposing the truth, after such demonstrative convictions; let us by charity, goodness, and the practice of all virtue, secure to ourselves that which is most excellent, and then, tho' the gifts of miracles are not continued to us, yet we shall obtain the end, for which they were given to others. Let us also consider, that he who speaks with tongues for the conversion of others, without the virtues of meekness and humility, love and charity, may himself be a castaway; but he whose mind is endued with those inward virtues, which are the more excellent gifts and fruits of the spirit, has attained that end, for the promoting which the other outwardly brighter and more resplendent gifts, were all intended but as means.

Let us take care to free ourselves from those unreasonable prejudices, with which want of consideration, and sinful lusts are used to blind us; and then shall we be soon convinced of the truth and necessity of religion. Let us but be sincerely willing to obey the will of God, and then we shall *know of the doctrine whether it be of God*. Let us be less governed by our passions, and more by reason; let us consider the arguments of reason and scripture, without prejudice or partiality, and resolve to direct our lives by those rules which appear most rational; and then we shall become as religious, by hearing *Moses* and the prophets, by hearing Christ and his apostles, as if one immediately from the dead was to preach to us."

D I S-

DISCOURSE IX. *Starbope.*

Of the perfection and usefulness of the holy scriptures.

2 Tim. 3. 16. 17.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

THE apostle, by scripture, means those writings which were generally received as authentic in the church of God; such were the books of the old testament, which came from heaven by the mouth and ministry of the prophets, as also those of the new testament, as were then extant, which indeed most, except the writings of St. John, seem to have been. And here it should be observed, that all scripture is to be understood in a collective sense, that is, we must interpret it of the whole body of scripture taken together, and not of every particular passage.

From these words we learn, first, that all scripture is given by inspiration of God; secondly, their general usefulness, the scripture is profitable for doctrine; for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; and by means of their usefulness and efficacy, the man of God, that is every good Christian who serves and obeys God, is perfected, and thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

As I have already discoursed of the divine original of scripture, I shall now confine myself to the latter part of the text, which the church of England hath thus expressed in her sixth article of religion. “*The holy scripture containeth all things necessary unto salvation; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.*” This truth being acknowledged, who can deny that the scriptures are a compleat guide in points of faith and manners, and able to *make us wise unto salvation?** But this however, I shall endeavour to prove. And first, I will consider what manner of perfection, we ought to attribute to, and expect from the scripture. And in order rightly to understand this matter, let us take a short view of the design of scripture, and what degree of perfection is necessary to answer that end. Or rather, examine what is meant by salvation, and the making us wise unto salvation.

The word salvation signifies that eternal happiness, which God hath appointed to be the ultimate, chief good of human nature. This happiness is proposed not as our fate, but as our reward; which reward supposes some works to be performed, for which the recompence is bestowed. Men must contribute something to their own happiness, it not being reasonable for them to hope to obtain it, without attending to those conditions, upon the performance of which the reward is suspended; and the right of appointing these conditions, must come from him who proposes and promises that recompence. And the wisdom and goodness of the creator is most eminently seen in this, that he deludes none of his creatures, with vain expectations, nor infuses any

* Rom. 8. 13, 14, 15.

such desires into them, as must of necessity be disappointed; but furnishes mankind with means and abilities, as well as inclination, to aspire after happiness. These abilities were impressed upon the mind of man, at his first creation, by those general notions of good and evil, then given him. Hence St. Paul mentions a law written in the hearts of those to whom the written law was not imputed. He observes the same pleasing transports, and melancholy misgivings, to rise in their breasts, according as their consciences accuse, or excuse them. He declares that in the last day, they shall be judged upon this issue. — Since then there was a time, when man enjoyed no written word, and that tho' some parts of the world were blest with such revelation, yet others unfortunately wanted it; since even those who had it not, were yet accountable for their actions; the consequence is plain and necessary, that the holy scriptures are not the *only* method, whereby God hath been pleased to inform men of their duty; they were not the first, nor the universal, and consequently not the sole, the perpetual instrument of all our privileges, and obedience.

But whatever hopes men had by nature, being founded on a just and punctual performance of duty, sin therefore made a farther revelation necessary. What St. Paul says of the Jewish law, may in a very true and good sense, be affirmed of all scripture, that it was added because of transgression. To persons thus under forfeiture, no just expectation or solid comfort could arise, but from God's express declaration, that he would grant us new conditions and a better covenant, suitable to our lapsed and guilty state. Hence it is, that the present methods of salvation are termed, *the secret of the Lord, the mystery of our redemption*; because these are some of the unsearchable depths of infinite wisdom.

wisdom and goodness: Such as no human discourse could penetrate, no natural conclusions infer: But God let men into the knowledge of it, by such gradual discoveries, as minds so darkened and degenerate were capable of. This then is the shining ray, darted from above, to give our souls the new-clearing prospect of bliss divine, and love incomprehensible. And thus are we assured that our judge is not irreconcileable, that we are not irretrievably lost, if we will but do our part, and not obstruct our own recovery.

However, it must be observed, that God in his dealings with mankind, does not act according to his own fulness and perfection, but to our wants. We must therefore acknowledge those former discoveries of his will to be perfect, tho' it only revealed so much as men had occasion for. The impressions of reason at man's first creation, were in degree and measure short of ours, because that state needed no more. The discoveries after the fall, the Jewish law and predictions of the prophets, had each their day and proper season; as the manifestations of the gospel have theirs now, being the last concluding dispensation; that which compleats, confirms and closes all the rest. In judging therefore the perfection of scripture, we must attend to the design it serves, and manner of accomplishing it. For example; in the historical part, we are not to expect a full and just relation of all that then happened in the world; nor of all that concerned the people, of whose affairs it treats. Such significant passages, as give a just account of our Saviour, and wherein the law and policy of the Jews were types of him, or of the Christian church, were sufficient for that purpose.

Thus the prophecies do not foretell all that should happen under the gospel, nor every thing to be done by our Lord, but only draw the principal

cipal lines, give representations and characters so like and lively, as when the son of God should appear in flesh, and events be compared with predictions, it might render men exceedingly to blame, not to accept and regard that person as the promised Messiah, in whom these predictions so exactly centered. Even St. John in his gospel, admits that many remarkable and wonderful things done by Christ, are not recorded; and yet enough are left to build mens faith upon. The all wise God could doubtless unde. each of those periods, have inspired the holy pen-man, with all that are omitted; or might, had he pleased, have revealed all at one time. But since he did not, we have reason, to conclude, that he intended the scripture not for a repository of all truths, taken in the comprehensive sense of the word; but of all which were needful to make men *wise unto salvation*; such as their present circumstances required, and what he intended they should be accountable for.

And let it be remembered, that our obligations to obey the scriptures, do not arise from their being written, but as they contain the discoveries of God's will and our duty. For all that comes to my knowledge, as the pleasure of God concerning me, is equally binding on my conscience, whatever the method be of conveying it. And we may be satisfied that God has formerly, and still does use, other methods of manifesting his will, besides that of the written word. There have been whole nations, thro' a long succession of time, that knew no other law but reason; to these when God added a brighter candle, he did not put out the old one, or forbid them to walk by its light, so far as that could direct them. The divine authority of scripture, and the being of God from whence it is derived, are principles arising from common reason. And how absurd would it be, to allow

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no standard of truth in religion, no rule of behaviour, but scripture? when the two fundamentals of all religion, must be proved from other principles, and cannot with any propriety, be taken from scripture itself.

It should also be observed, that the scriptures, as a rule of faith and life, do not concern us just as the words and syllables are there set down; in regard many qualifications are requisite, to understand the true sense and rational meaning of the text; such as a mind truly honest, sincere and unprejudiced; the being desirous to learn, ready to retract errors, and reform vices, when they shall appear to be such. To this we must add, diligence, care and skill, to enable us to compare, to reconcile, and to form a judgment out of the scriptures; to consider the context, the occasions, the expressions, the genius of countries, and proprieties of language; and to fix upon such just interpretations, as not to set one part of scripture at variance with another. And where these qualifications are not to be had, a meek and quiet spirit, a reasonable submission to honest and better judgments, and enduring to be ignorant in matters above our reach, will then become a necessary duty. But all this is the work of a man's own understanding and will, assisted by God's grace; and so necessary, that without such application to fair, unbiased reason, the very word of God itself may misguide and prove a snare to us.

The sum then of what has been said on this head, is, — First, That as to the mysteries and doctrines peculiar to the christian faith, such as the incarnation and satisfaction of Christ, the justification of sinners by faith, the assistances of the holy spirit, the trinity of persons in the divine essence, which are all necessary and distinguishing doctrines of the christian religion; in these the scriptures

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tures are our absolute and only rule : For they are branches of a new covenant, revelations of stupendous and important concern, displaying free acts of mercy ; such as depended on no necessary causes in nature, nor any way concerned man in his primitive state, and therefore not within the reach of reason. These could come only from God, on whom we ought entirely to depend for them ; his truth and infinite wisdom are a just foundation of our belief, tho' the matter revealed may far exceed our comprehension. — 2. That in matters of practice, the scripture is our supreme, but not only rule : What nature and reason teach, revelation enlarges and refines upon, and confirms with a fresh sanction. It exalts our virtues, directs us to proceed on nobler principles, teaches some duties not known without it, leads us to certain ends, affords us means above the powers of nature ; and proposes rewards heavenly and divine. So that revelation does not quench, but adds fresh oil to the light of nature ; and is therefore properly styled, *a candle to our feet, and a lanthorn to our paths.** — 3. That the perfection of scripture does not confine itself only to such matters of faith and practice as are absolutely necessary to salvation ; but is also full of excellent rules to improve our knowledge, and adorn our profession. It consults the beauty and gracefulness, the life and being of christianity. It leaves us general hints, which will depend on the honesty and direction of applying them, to our own exigencies and conditions. In short, it is no disparagement to the scriptures character, that some by neglecting, and others by abusing it, want that saving wisdom it might give : Nor does it lessen the perfections of this rule, that some cases are so plain and obvious, as not to need its particular directions ; and that others are of so little moment, as not to deserve them.

Thus

* Psal. 119. 105.

Thus have I stated the perfection of scripture ; and here it may be proper, to offer some general arguments, in favour of the protestants opinion, as to the sufficiency of scripture. In order to make scripture a competent guide, in cases that truly concern it, only two things are necessary ; that it be sufficiently particular and express, and that it be plain and intelligible. There was an excellent reason why St. Paul did begin his character of the scriptures perfection, with an account of its being given, by *inspiration of God* ; and affords a very significant argument, to enforce what follows. For where should we expect perfection, but from him, who is the source and sum of all perfection ? He whose power and wisdom are infinite, was most likely to impress such marks of excellency on the scriptures, as might convince the world, they were his, by being worthy of him. He whose goodness and mercy are the eminent shining attributes of the divinity, may reasonably be presumed to exercise that power and wisdom, on so important an occasion, as the salvation of a whole world. His own meer bounty, put him upon the mysterious work of our redemption ; and can we suppose he would not sufficiently make known the terms on which the success and efficacy of that work depends ?

We are told indeed, no writing can be a sufficient rule, because capable of different constructions ; and that some living interpreter is necessary, upon whose sense we may securely rely. But how weak is this argument ? For is any thing spoken, which may not be written ? And may not the same words when written, be as full, clear, plain and distinct, as when spoken ? Is not a man's word as liable to be perverted as his writing ? nay a written word seems a more plain and sufficient rule than an oral one. And can any reason be assigned,

signed, why the dictates of the holy ghost written in the bible, should not be as safe, full and intelligible a direction, as any interpretations or decrees composed by any living persons? To deny this, is both absurd and impious. Human laws indeed, may be obscure, men not being always happy in their expressions, or they may studiously contrive to leave them intricate, dark and ambiguous. But God hath neither frailty nor interest, to dispose him thus. He speaks on purpose to be understood. To leave men in darkness and distress, and destitute of such helps, as must occasion their eternal ruin, very little agrees with the kind inclinations he hath otherwise expressed for our happiness. But,

The sufficiency and plainness of scripture, are both strongly implied, in that faith and obedience are made the conditions of everlasting salvation; and unbelief and disobedience threatened with hell and damnation, to such as enjoy the light of the gospel. And if belief and practice must bring us to heaven, then sure God hath left a compleat system of things necessary to be believed and done, with directions sufficiently plain, calculated for all degrees and capacities of men, let their understandings be what they will. That God therefore must needs have made sufficient discoveries of his will, is so confessedly evident, that our adversaries find no fault for our alledging this, but for confining these discoveries to scripture only.

Thus then do the scriptures command our assent and obedience, because of their coming from God; and of this we are assured, by its authors giving proper and authentic testimonies of a commission and inspiration truly divine, and that the miracles in which that testimony consisted, were really performed, we have the report both of friends and enemies to their doctrine; the proof of infinite converts won over by them, contrary to all the interests

interests and inclinations of flesh and blood; and besides, the concurring consent of the church universal in all ages, which is alone a most credible evidence.

The sum then of my *second* head is this; that according to all we can reasonably conceive of God, he must needs have made some competent provision for men to understand their duty; they cannot escape eternal ruin, without the knowledge of it; the knowledge of Christianity could only come by divine revelation; and it does not appear that God hath distinguished any method or rule of this kind, in so eminent a manner as he hath done the scriptures; and therefore we have reason to believe and respect them, as that competent provision. I now proceed to shew, as briefly as I can, the usefulness of the scriptures.

The apostle says, *the scripture is profitable for doctrine*; meaning such truths as are necessary to be believed; namely, that we have a right information concerning God, and ourselves; what he is, what we are, and hope to be; what he hath done for our sakes, and how we may become acceptable in his sight. And the scripture gives a large and clear account of this. It describes our happy and healthful state; tells when, and how our innocence was lost, and sets forth both the sickness and cure. It presents us with the leisurely advances made towards it; the personal revelations to the patriarchs; the rites and figures of *Moses's* law; the clearer predictions, and more refined precepts of the prophets; and these accommodated to the several stages of the world. At last, when the fulness of time was come, for the last and most perfect revelation; the gospel appears, which shews us the Saviour of the world, the son of God, and in him all those prophecies centering together, with marvellous harmony and consent. And here we have our souls raised to higher and

and juster notions of God and goodness; we are taught to worship him in spirit and in truth; a service most suitable to the majesty of his nature, and the dignity of our own. We see the adorable mystery of the son of God, in flesh, and a human body exalted to the right hand of the majesty on high; a person truly divine, conversing with men, professing and importuning them to be happy, nay, dying for them, that they may live for ever; and whatever mysterious, intricate passages, the scripture may contain, for the exercise, or humiliation of men, wise in their own conceits, yet the historical account of our redemption is related in circumstances so natural and moving, in language so easy and expressive; that the most scrupulous, honest reader, may be settled and convinced; and the plainest, weakest understanding be enlightened and edified by them. For whatever darkness and mists may now obscure these saving truths, this proceeds not from their own original ambiguities, so much as from the studied niceties of subtil, designing men; who, under pretence of distinguishing and explaining, have confounded, and rendered them unintelligible; even to the loss of truth and piety itself. But,

The scripture is likewise profitable for *reproof*; by which is commonly meant, the confuting of errors and corrupt opinions, that oppose the truth: Thus the law and the testimony was the touch and trial, to which all were to be brought. And our Saviour attributes the error of the *Sadduces*, concerning the resurrection and a future state, to their not knowing the scriptures. And the apostle here sends *Timothy* to the scriptures, as a defence against those perilous times, foretold in the beginning of this chapter. The earnest exhortations of the primitive fathers, to be much conversant in these holy books; their imputing the danger of their divisions

visions, to the neglect of it; most evidently shew, that they always regarded the written word, as the standard of doctrine and faith; and to which all ought to have recourse, and be determined by. Traditional articles, and infallible interpreters, had then no place. For tho' St. Peter says, some scriptures were wrested by some men, to their own destruction; yet it was the unlearned and unstable that did it; men of a restless temper. And would the captious exercise their wits, only on such passages as are hard to be understood, the consequence would not be great. It is the necessary points only, in which we maintain the sufficiency of scripture; and I hope it hath been proved, that what is not full and plain cannot be necessary.

If men would read the bible with honesty and diligence, with meekness and modesty, we should all soon agree in things requisite to salvation; and for the rest, we may entertain different notions, and be safe and quiet; and it would signify little, whether such controversies were ever fettled. When our eternal state is brought into hazard, the peace of the public, or the order of the church is broken; when private friendships cease, and misunderstandings arise; these are not the effects of different opinions, but of indiscretion, intemperate heats, and bitter zeal. And whoever examines the rise and growth of heresies and schisms, will find, that craft, and not ignorance, were generally at the bottom; and not so much the want, as the abuse of wit. In short, God hath done for us, as much as became him; he hath left necessary truth, plain and obvious; he will be gracious to innocent ignorance and mistake; and therefore, tho' all may be deceived in points unnecessary, yet none shall suffer, but those who wilfully deceive themselves, or labour to pervert and disturb others.

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The next instance of the scriptures usefulness, is in *correction*, that is, reforming of manners. The peculiar glory of Christianity, is to make the world better, to sweeten mens tempers, purify their hearts and affections, tame their wild passions, and check those exorbitances, which render them odious to God, uneasy and troublesome to themselves and others. And when we happen to fail in these, we are then instructed, exhorted, and entreated to recover ourselves, by speedy and serious repentance; to call up all the powers of reason and religion, thereby to prevent the dangers of delay, and of obstinate impenitence. We are restrained from our secret sins, by the constant presence and observance of an all-seeing judge; one, from whose thunder no cover can shelter, and from whose eye no darkness can hide us; one who sees our hearts and reins, and all our evil thoughts and actions, even before they are conceived. Here we have vice shewn in its native deformity, as the most deceitful in appearance, the most destructive in its effects; the mother of sorrow, shame and death; that cheats us with imaginary, momentary pleasures; with satisfactions that cease in an instant; but leaves real, lasting pains, abandons us to the horrors of guilt and confusion, amazement and despair; and at last plunges men into the bottomless pit; a place of vengeance and fruitless remorse, where the gnawing worm never dies, the burning flame is never quenched. These are some of the terrors of the Lord to persuade men to be wiser; and amazingly stupid must those be, who are not persuaded.

Lastly, the scripture is profitable, for *instruction* in *righteousness*; that is, directing us how to please, and be like God. Thus it prescribes pure hearts, clean hands, well-governed passions; a mind watchful against temptations, easy and resigned to pro-

providence raised above this world, and therefore moderate in its desires, and reserved in its enjoyments. It consults the benefit of all conditions, prescribes virtues proper for every relation and state of life; and invites to the practice of them, by the satisfaction and benefit they bring to ourselves and others. For if a graceful behaviour, the ease and tranquillity of our own mind, and the praise of others ; if health, peace, and mutual happiness ; if the blessings which a good life tends to produce, by recommending us to the favour and protection of God ; if aspiring to be like him here, and the assurance of being eternally happy hereafter ; if these have any charms, as they surely have, then will not men want sufficient instruction in righteousness, while they enjoy the scriptures.

St. Paul assures us, that *these things were written for our learning, that we, thro' patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope* †. And what consolation does the scripture supply us with, on these occasions ? What firm grounds of a stedfast confidence in an almighty, compassionate father ; who is always able and ready to help ; a father who chastises because he loves, and only grieves us with a design to our profit ? what patterns of distressed and injured, of rewarded and successful virtue, does it represent to us, and bids us arm our minds by their examples ? The patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, but above all, the meek and suffering *Jesus* ? and how glorious a scene does it draw ? what triumphs, what crowns does it propose ? what a ravishing prospect does it open, by assuring all who suffer for and with him, that they also shall live and reign with him for ever. The sweet transports of a good conscience, the pleasing sense of a reconciled God, the experience of his favour, the earnest expectation of a promised and blessed eternity ; all these break in upon good men, like light thro' a cloud,

† Rom. 15. 4.

cloud, to allay all our grief and fears, to calm and smooth our roughest passage thro' this valley of tears, and to take out the sting of that last greatest terror to poor men, by softning, and even recommending temporal death itself to us. Welcome therefore this holy religion, this blest and powerful book, to us dark wretched mortals. A book pure and clear as the place it came from; wise and good, like the spirit of him who formed it. And may this invaluable book, my christian brethren, be ever first and best in our esteem, most in our thoughts, our studies and desires. May it be entirely writ and fairly copied in our memories and hearts, and shine bright in all our conversation. For this divine volume will sanctify our other studies, enlarge our understandings, refine and exalt our souls, and teach us to excel others, and even daily to excel ourselves. In much of all other knowledge there is much sorrow, but this will make us wise with pleasure and safety; not only wiser for this world, but for heaven and eternal salvation.

All thanks and praise therefore be rendered to our gracious God, for these his revelations! Praise for their general benefit and influence, but double praise for those advantages, by which we are obliged, and indispensably engaged to employ ourselves in such holy and heavenly studies.

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DISCOURSE X: Barrow.

The Christian, the Pagan, the Mahometan,
and the Jewish religions compared.

Ephes. I. 13.

In whom ye also trusted, having heard the word of
truth, the gospel of your salvation.

IN these words, and in many other places of scripture, the christian doctrine is called, the word of truth, and the gospel of salvation. That is, a most true doctrine, or message brought down from heaven, by our Saviour and his apostles; in which, the way and means of attaining salvation, the overtures thereof made by God, and the conditions from us, are fully declared.

But previous to my shewing the reason we have to embrace this word or doctrine of truth, it may be proper to observe, that christianity does not require a bare groundless faith, or debar men from the use of reason, and enjoin them to believe without examining the reason and truth of its doctrines. For never did any religion so freely expose itself to a fair trial at the bar of reason, nor so earnestly invite men to consider and examine what it proposes; leaving it to the verdict of that reason and conscience, with which God hath endued every man. This is farther evident, from the nature of that faith it requires. Christianity represents faith as a great virtue, and therefore supposes it to be both voluntary and reasonable. It promiseth ample rewards thereto, which proves it to be a work of care and industry, and not necessity. It declares infidelity to be very sinful, and threatens severely to punish it, because it implies great perverseness or neglect of reason.

reason. Christianity compels no man by force to believe it, but fairly persuades him by reason to embrace it. The religion of Christ doth not prohibit, but earnestly recommends examination, to find out the truth; nor does it disclaim the judgment of reason, but readily appeals to it. *Examine all things, but hold fast that which is good* †. *Believe not every spirit, but try whether it be of God* ‡. *Let no man deceive you, but be always ready with meekness and respect, to give to every one, a reason of the hope that is in you* *. These are the maxims by which christianity propagates and maintains itself.

The first principle of christianity, common to all religions, is the belief of a God, a being of all perfection, the maker and governor of all things. The second is, that God is perfectly true. The third is, that God is the author of the christian doctrine, or law; that he hath revealed it to mankind, and confirmed it by his testimony. This last principle not being immediately evident in itself, but arising from a matter of fact, it requires a rational proof, in order to produce in us conviction, and a solid persuasion of mind. And that we believe this truth like reasonable men, and not as Pagans and Mahometans do their religion, by wilful resolution or meer chance, I shall endeavour to make appear. And first, it is reasonable to suppose, that God should, at some certain time, clearly and fully reveal unto men such truths as concern his nature and will, and our state and particular duty. For experience assures us, that natural light is insufficient to direct mankind, it leaving them under great ignorance and uncertainty, exposing men to such vices as were very dishonourable, hurtful and destructive to their nature, and to all those miseries which naturally spring from ignorance and error, vice and

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† 1 Thes. 5. 21. ‡ 1 John 4. 1. * 1 Pet. 3. 15.

wickedness; which render them incapable of his love and favour. Not only the generality of men did some time lie in this sad condition, but the most elevated and refined wits, even those who by the improvement of their reason, endeavoured to raise themselves from this low state, to rescue their minds from the common ignorance, mistakes, superstitions, and follies of the world, could not in any good measure attain those ends. For what did their earnest enquiries and restless studies produce, but dissatisfaction and perplexity of mind? In what did their eager disputes terminate, but in irreconcileable differences of opinion, and greater uncertainties than before? none could attain to more than faint conjectures concerning points of the highest moment, so as to produce in them a practice suitable to the dignity of man's nature, to his duty to God, and the capacity he hath of receiving good, and doing much benefit to man. Their reasonings and disputes were *vain*, and their foolish hearts so darkned † that with all their light, they could not clearly discern what much concerned them to know. The world by all the wisdom it could get did not know God*, so as to glorify and thank him for his benefits, and to bring forth fruits worthy of piety and virtue. This St. Paul † not only observed of them, but even they themselves greatly complain of the blindness of their minds, of the obscurity and uncertainty of things, of the insuperable difficulty of finding truth, and of the miserable consequences which from thence occur.

And this being the natural state of men, destitute of divine conduct, and assistance; how greatly must they want some other light to guide or bring them out of this darkness; some kind hand to free them from these inconveniences? And is it not rea-

† Rom. 2. Ephes. 4. 17. * 1 Cor. 1. 21. † Rom. 1. 2, 18.

reasonable to suppose, that God, who is not only able but willing, should in due time afford it ! He, who in nature is most kind and bountiful, whose goodness fills the earth, and whose mercy is over all his works ; he, who bears to man, the relation, tenderness, affection, and good will of a father ; he, whose attributes engage him to this performance, not only his goodness to excite, and his wisdom to direct him, but his justice also obliging him thereto. God, whose goodness is immutable, will be ever mindful of, and compassionate to his children. His gracious ear cannot hear mankind dolefully groaning under bitter oppressions, his pitiful eye cannot behold the flower of his creation, lying in so distressed and comfortless a state ; without feeling some pity, and affording some relief. For can we suppose him, who is goodness itself ; he, who hath so amply provided for the needs, conveniences and pleasure of the body, should take so little care of our better part the soul, as to neglect and let it want spiritual sustenance ? We cannot with any reason imagine, that God's good providence should be defective in so main and principal a part. And as his goodness strongly confirms the supposition, so does his wisdom enforce the same. God made the world to express his goodness, and display his glory ; but who can be sensible of his goodness ? who perceive and promote his glory, but man ? Who, but he, that is endued with reason, which enables him to reflect on the good he feels, to admire the excellency he discovers, to render grateful acknowledgements for the one, and acclamations of praise for the other ? But this would in great measure be frustrated, should God for ever suffer men to continue in ignorance, doubt, or mistake concerning himself. Unless men are fully persuaded that he made and governs the world, how can they pay homage to his glorious power, admire his excellent

cellent wisdom, or love his transcendant goodness. Reason tells us, that God would have men act in the best manner they can ; that he would have their affairs prosper ; that he earnestly desires their goodness, and delights in their happiness : and if so, 'tis reasonable to suppose, that God in his wisdom should appoint means fit to accomplish those ends ; that he should impart to men a competent knowledge of himself ; that he should reveal and declare his good will and pleasure to them, as to the best way of serving him, and of attaining their own happiness. And as God's goodness and wisdom are arguments in favour of a divine revelation, so is his justice. For every good governor thinks it just to take care, that his subjects should know his will, and be acquainted with his laws ; and to excite their obedience, he offers fit rewards ; to deter from offending, he threatens proper punishments ; knowing that man's nature requires such spurs. And is it reasonable to suppose, that the sovereign governor and judge of all the world, should observe less equity in his administration ; that he should neglect any necessary means to promote the performance of his subjects duty, or prevent the breaches of his laws ? He who so perfectly loves righteousness, so earnestly desires to be carefully obeyed, so infinitely delights in his subjects good ; will he not sufficiently declare his mind, as well to encourage men to comply with his will, as to prevent them from transgressing it ? Will he suffer his laws to remain unknown or uncertain, or so disregard the infirmities of his subjects, as to leave them some excuse for their disobedience ; to suppose this, is contrary to the perfect justice, as well as goodness and wisdom of God.

Indeed, we cannot judge or determine, the particular circumstances and limits of God's dealing with men in this respect ; as to the time when,

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the manner how, and the measure, according to which God will dispense such revelations of himself. These depending on the counsel of infinite wisdom, which far surpasses our comprehension. That God should for a while connive at men's ignorance, and suffer them to grope after divine truth ; that he should try how they would behave in that state, and use their talent of natural light ; in order to convince them of their ignorance, to shew them from whence, and on whom, all their happiness depends ; to make them more able to value, more desirous to embrace a revelation which would afford them relief, under their miserable circumstances ; as also to demonstrate his own great clemency, long-suffering and patience : I say, that God for such reasons, or others not to be comprehended by our finite understandings, should not for some time fully declare all his mind to men, is not strange or improbable. But that he should for ever leave men in such depth of ignorance, and perplexity of doubt, is no way likely or probable ; nor is it in reason, contrary to the goodness, wisdom, or justice of God, for him clearly to discover, what duty he requires from us, or good intends us ; what way leads to our happiness, and how we may avoid misery. This consideration, if it does not certainly prove that God cannot but some time or other, make such a revelation, or hath actually done it ; yet it should dispose us readily to admit other arguments that will be urged : For it not being improbable, but according to the reason of the thing, likely or very probable, that God may thus act ; this may make us more attentively regard whatever is offered to demonstrate the truth of it. Which leads me, in the next place, to prove, that no other revelation of such importance hath been made, and that no religion which ever yet appeared, can with so much probability, claim God for its

its author ; so as to be a general, perpetual, and complete instruction to mankind. There are indeed three that have pretended thereto, namely, *Paganism*, *Mahometanism*, and *Judaism*, each of these I shall briefly examine, and endeavour to prove that their pretensions are very ill grounded.

As to *Paganism*, tho' it pretends to a kind of revelation, yet it never did nor could pretend to any one uniform revelation from God, solemnly delivered, and directed to all mankind : which shews that such pretended revelations not only were imperfect and insufficient, to the ends proposed, but also false and counterfeit. If we take a short view of the pagan religion, we shall find it nothing but a mixture of inconsistency, obscenity, vanity and folly ; little tending to the honour of God, or the good of men ; to the promoting virtue and goodness ; to the maintaining justice, peace, love, and good order among men ; but rather tending to produce the contrary effects. If we survey it throughout, we shall find it full of idle, ill-contrived, and incredible stories ; void of truth or sincerity, wit or discretion ; attended with practices foolish, lewd, and cruel ; unworthy of human nature, contrary to common sense and honesty. Their worship directed to very unsuitable improper objects ; to the spirit of dead men, who in their life time, were vilely enormous, guilty of thefts and rapines, murders and parricides, of horrid lusts, adulteries, rapes, and incest. Persons, that good and wise men would rather hate and despise, than respect and worship. Nay, they worshipped the vilest of brute beasts, dogs, serpents, and crocodiles ; also inanimate creatures, the stars and elements, rivers and trees ; they dedicated temples, and offered sacrifices to things void of subsistence, even to the passions of our mind, the diseases of our body, and the accidents of our lives ; to adore and pay veneration

ration to all which must argue a very abject and weak mind. To such objects as these they paid their respect and devotion, in them they reposed their confidence. And is it likely such a religion should proceed from God, or that it can produce glory to him, or benefit to man? What piety towards God? what justice, truth, or goodness towards men? what sobriety, purity, or morality can we expect from such principles and practices?

But it is needless to argue against that which no reasonable wise man did ever seriously think had any truth or reality in it. *Plato* often condemns those foolish fables in heathen theology, on which the whole œconomy of their religious practices depended. *Aristotle* attributes the foundation of their religion to statesmen. None of the fathers did ever more earnestly dispute against and oppose heathenism than *Pliny*. Most of the philosophers expressed a great dislike and contempt of the vulgar religious opinions and practices. What *Cicero* saith of one part, the wiser sort did judge of all; *the whole was deceitfully forged, either for gain, or out of superstition, or from mistake*. Enough then has been said, to prove that *paganism* did not proceed from divine revelation, but from human invention and wicked suggestion; and from hence appears the great necessity of some full and plain revelation of God's mind and will, in order to promote his glory, and the good of man; as also to discover our great obligations to bless and thank God for his great mercy to us in revealing his divine will, and freeing us from such deplorable errors and mischiefs.

I now proceed to examine the *Mahometan* religion, raised up since christianity became known; which in respect to its age and the character it bears, demands some consideration; it having continued a long time, and vastly overspread the world. But if we examine the substance and circumstances of

it, the quality of the instruments by whom, with the times when it was introduced ; the places where, the people who received it ; the manner of its rise, progress, and continuance ; as also the matter it teaches and enjoyns : we shall perceive in it no genuine characters of a divine original, but really find it to be a most wicked contrivance, a lewd and impudent imposition on mankind. In times of great confusion, when barbarous nations overspread the world ; when a general corruption among christians, even ignorance and superstition, dissention and uncharitableness ; impiety and great wickednes did notoriously prevail ; then in an obscure corner of the earth, among a crew of thieves and profligate fellows (as all those *Arabians* were) had this *sect* its rise and birth. Upon this fierce and savage people was this religion, (indeed well accommodated to their humour and genius) by jugling tricks, and seditious violence imposed and obtruded. The first author of it, according to the truest account, was a person who had all the marks of an impostor ; being inhuman and cruel, lewd and lascivious ; of a base education, turbulent disposition, and vicious life ; pretending to the power of performing such wonders, as were in their nature absurd and incredible, useless and vain. At such a season, by such methods, and by such a person assisted by some like himself, was this religion first planted. And as to the propagation thereof, it had the advantage of falling in the way of people void of learning and civility, destitute of any true notions or sense of religion ; and it diffused itself by rage and terror of arms, convincing men by the sword, and using no other arguments than force. On the same grounds it still subsists, rejecting reason, refusing examination, and forbidding any dispute about its truth, under severe penalties ; fearing, no doubt that

that a moderate liberty of discussing its pretences would easily overthrow it.

But that divine wisdom should make choice of one (so dissolute in life) from the desarts of *Arabia*, and order his laws to be published to a meer rabbble of vile and abandoned wretches, is a way of proceeding that cannot possible be imputed to divine wisdom. So that if we consider the nature of the rise, growth, and continuance of *Mahometanism*, it is a strong presumption against its divinity, and plainly demonstrates it could not come from God; whose truth needs not such instruments and methods, and whose goodness abhors them. And if we look into the matter and mixed frame of it, we shall find it a mass of absurd opinions, odd stories, ridiculous ceremonies; compounded of the dregs of christian heresies, with some ingredients of *Judaism*, and *Paganism*, confusedly jumbled and mixed together. From christian heresies it has derived several doctrines opposite to christianity. For instance; that of denying *Christ's* being the son of God, and that he did really suffer; the believing that unreasonable opinion so contrary to God's nature, that God hath a body, and which *Mahomet* pretended he once felt, and found it very cold. Their doctrine concerning the fatal determination of all events, so prejudicial to all religion, they probably borrowed from the *Manichees*, a sect that much obtained in those eastern parts. From the *Jews* they took circumcision, frequent purgations by water, abstinence from swines flesh, the allowance of polygamy and divorce; and perhaps also the monopolizing of divine favour to themselves, and of restraining all kindnesses and respect to those of their own sect and profession; not only condemning, despising, and hating all others, whom they adjudge to certain damnation, but affirming that all of their belief, how wicked soever they

live, shall assuredly partake of salvation. And as to their notion of God, his attributes and providence, it is most unworthy of and repugnant to his nature. Their descriptions of a future state, which is the principal part of their religion, from whence is it to be deduced, but from the *pagan* stories of *Elysium* and *Hades*? Where otherwise can we trace that paradise of corporeal delight, of brutish sensuality, so much countenanced by their religion; and yet, so contrary to reason and honesty, so unworthy of any virtuous reward? who, unless he is very stupid, or much inclined to indulge his pleasure, and gratify his sensual appetites, can suffer himself to be persuaded, that such a religion can come from the God of wisdom and holiness. And as to *Mahomet*'s being inspired, there is nothing to support it, but stories patched up of old histories, corrupted and interspersed with fabulous legends, contrary to all probable records of history, and very repugnant to the nature and possibility of things. The same may be said concerning its multitude of silly ceremonies, founded on no reasonable design, subservient to no purpose of virtue, the institution whereof cannot, without great injury, be imputed to divine wisdom. And tho' in their religion there are some precepts of justice and charity, yet it may reasonably be supposed, that these are taken from christianity, which is much the older. Thus have I sufficiently demonstrated, that neither the *Pagan* or *Mahometan* religion is of divine extraction. I shall now proceed to examine the pretensions of *Judaism*.

It must be acknowledged, that the *Jewish* religion was originally revealed by God; but tho' we question not its truth and goodness, yet upon due enquiry we shall find it to be in many respects defective. For it was not universal, neither directed to, nor designed for the nature and wants of all

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mankind ; nor yet so full and complete as to be of perpetual obligation. That this revelation was not general, nor intended to instruct and oblige all mankind ; but peculiarly designed for that small nation of the *Jews*, which possessed a very inconsiderable part of the earth, appears by express passages in their law and writings. † *God shewed his word unto Jacob, his statutes and judgments unto Israel ; he hath not dealt so with any nation.* † *I the Lord am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine ; even * from all the people that are upon the face of the earth.* And saith *Moses* to the *Jews*, *Thou art a holy people, whom the Lord hath chosen unto himself, as a peculiar people, above all that are on earth.* Their religious constitution is frequently stiled a covenant, made, not between God and mankind, but between God and that single nation ; a covenant in formal terms mentioning *them* only ; sealed with marks and characters peculiar to *them*, requiring conditions and duties only possible or proper for *them* to perform ; promising rewards which *they* only could receive, and threatening punishments, which *they* only could undergo. *Hear, O Israel,* is the usual style to whom those laws are directed. *I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt,* is the introduction to the decalogue or ten commandments, which, of all their laws, is of the most general importance and obligation ; and yet this is peculiarly called the covenant between God and that people. In their laws a distinction is made between those who were bound to observe it, and such as were not ; between *brethren* and *strangers*, *Hebrews* and *aliens* ; and different duties were required from each : such as observation of feasts, in commemoration and thankfulness for

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† Psal. 147. 46, 82. † Lev. 20. 26. * Exod. 33. 16. || Deut. 4. 13. Exod. 34. 28.

mercies vouchsafed to their nation ; that of repairing thrice a year to a certain place, for God's worship ; of bringing tythes and oblations thither ; of the great number of *priests* and *levites* appointed for God's service ; of a long and prosperous enjoyment of the land of *Canaan*.

The laws and privileges of this religion were also only designed for this people ; for as they did only agree to their circumstances, were directly adapted to their perverse inclinations, and low capacities, so were they repugnant to the common humour and genius of mankind. By all which considerations, it evidently appears, that this dispensation was not, in its nature and design, general, or such as respected all mankind, but limited and restrained to the use of one place and people, both small and inconsiderable. It is not therefore in reason to be taken for such a revelation, as might be expected from him, who is good to all, and whose tender mercies are over all his works ; † from him, who is the common father of all, having made of one blood, the whole nation and commonwealth of mankind ‡; from him, who is not only the maker, but saviour of all men, he being desirous that all men should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth ; not willing that any should perish, but that all men should come to repentance ; from him who is not only a lover of Jews and Greeks, but a lover of all men, for he is not the God of the Jews only, but of the Gentiles also. From this God so inclined and disposed to regard us, so impartial in his affection, so unlimited in his bounty, we have more reason to expect no revelation at all, than one confined within such narrow bounds, so disproportioned to the glory which is due to God, and to the necessities of mankind. This revelation therefore was not in this

† Psal. 145. 8 ‡ Acts 17. 26.

this respect sufficient, not being general and universal.

And as this revelation was particular, and that God did not therein speak his mind to all, so it was partial and imperfect, for he did not declare *all* his will. *If the first covenant had been faultless, faith the apostle †, then should no place have been sought for the second. The law made nothing perfect.* This will easily appear if we consider both parts thereof, that which directs, and the other which excites to practice. As to the directive part, we may observe a redundancy in things circumstantial, and a great defect in things substantial; a vast number of ritual institutions appointed and exactly required: such as the observing times and places, the distinction of meats and habits, (of which they were not to *touch, taste, or handle*) corporeal cleansings and purgations, sacrifices and oblations; these were prescribed and enjoyed under heavy penalties; while the moral duties of justice and charity, temperance and sobriety, and true spiritual devotion, (which is much more agreeable to our rational nature, and more pleasing to God) was neither clearly explained, or much insisted on, nor yet enforced with rational arguments, or suitable rewards. Many things, which even natural reason dislikes or condemns, were permitted or connived at; as *polygamy* and *divorce*, some degrees of revenge and uncharitableness. Thus faulty and defective was that dispensation, in matters directive of life; and it was the same in what concerns good practice. Nothing so much hinders our cheerful endeavours as despair, or diffidence of success; nothing more excites them, than a reasonable presumption thereof. But how could they earnestly endeavour to please God, who were not assured of, but had reason to distrust God's placability and readiness, upon repentance,

† Heb. 8. 7. 7. 18.

pentance, to forgive wilful presumptuous sinner ; and if the not opening a door of mercy seems discouraging, and tends to prevent the performance of duty ; what then must this severe threatening be ; *cursed is he, that abides not in all things written in the law to do them* † ? This was enough to exclude assurance and the hopes of mercy, to extinguish all care and industry in serving God. Nor were the rewards promised to obedience such as the reason of things doth afford and require. They were only temporal and chiefly sensible, such as concerned the outward state of this transitory life ; which neither deserve much regard, nor are of any great efficacy. For who will, or in reason should, highly value the accommodations of this short uncertain life ? or be greatly terrified with the inconveniences thereof ? such considerations cannot sufficiently animate men, to encounter and sustain the perils, difficulties, troubles, and disgraces, to which the practice of virtue is often exposed ; nor guard them from the enchantments of pleasure, profit, and honour, which are apt to allure us to sin. For how improper an encouragement are the pleasures of sense, how unworthy a recompence these, for the labour and achievements of virtue ? Incomparably better, more worthy of regard, more apt to produce real virtue and sincere piety, are the rewards concerning the future state of our immortal soul ; and yet this is what the *jewish* law doth scarce ever mention, at least not plainly and clearly. Indeed, the *pagan* priests more expressly taught, and more frequently inculcated the belief of the immortality of man's soul, or a future state than the *Hebrew* prophets ; a plain instance and strong argument this of the imperfection of the *jewish* religion.

Another main defect in that religion was, that it represented the obligation and difficulty of our duty,

† Gal. 3. 10.

duty, with the danger of transgressing it, but did not propose the requisite means of performing it. Well therefore might St. Paul call this dispensation, *a ministry of death and condemnation, a subjection to a curse, a killing letter* †.

But I would not, by reasoning thus, lay any imputation on God, the author of that religion; the making so imperfect a revelation being in no respect disagreeable to his wisdom, goodness, or justice: since as God might for a time, very consistent with infinite wisdom, withhold the declaration of his mind to all mankind; so likewise might he forbear to declare some part thereof to his people the *Jews*: there appearing no particular reason that could oblige or induce him to act otherwise; nay, some good reason may be assigned, why God should not discover fully his nature and pleasure to them, and why he laid so much stress on carnal ceremonious observances, without requiring more of spiritual duty and worship: perhaps, a dawning of light better suited that morning of times, than a meridian brightness; or that infancy of the world might not be full ripe for a more deep and perfect instruction; or, that nation, for whom those laws and institutions were adapted, was not capable to bear the highest and hardest lessons. For scripture assures us, the *Jews* were a nation not wise or considerate, but a very stupid and heady, foward and stubborn generation of men. *They were people void of counsel and understanding; an obstinate and stiffnecked people**. The divine wisdom and goodness was therefore pleased to deal with them as such; dispensing with their infirmities, condescending to their weak capacities, feeding them with milk, and so tempering his ordinances, as might best serve to keep them in good humour; to draw and intice them to

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† 2 Cor. 3. 7, 9. Gal. 3. 10. 2 Cor. 3. 6. * Deut. 32. 28. Isai. 48. 4. Jer. 4. 22. 5. 4.

somewhat good, to curb and restrain them from evil. Hence, the apostle calls those institutions, *poor and mean elements of the world*; *rudiments of knowledge and discipline* †; suited to the capacity of the first age and meanest rank, such as vulgar and silly people were able to learn and practise.

This dispensation was also adapted to the slavish spirit of that people, who having little ingenuity or inclination to do good, would have grown sturdy and insolent had they not been kept under and inured to something of burthen and toil. God therefore dealt according to *wisdom* with the *Jews*, when he imposed such burdens on their shoulders, burdens intolerably heavy and troublesome; and to be loosed therefrom, is an invaluable privilege and benefit purchased by our Saviour for us*. So that such a dispensation was not fit for the rational nature in common, nor could God be satisfied with such mean performances. From whence it appears that this revelation was in many respects partial and imperfect.

Indeed God did afterwards impart, by degrees, farther manifestations of his light and grace to that people, by the instructions and exemplary practices of prophets and holy men, whom he raised up on extraordinary occasions. The prophets frequently declared, that God delighted not in those ceremonious observances, nor would accept of them, unless accompanied with practices of morality and spiritual piety; that he chiefly required of them humble reverence to himself, and submission to his will; strict justice and tender charity towards their neighbours; meekness and patience in their behaviour, temperance and sobriety in all their conversation. God also thro' them discovered more of his gracious disposition, and merciful intentions towards men; as that he would not be extremely rigorous in punishing the transgressors of his laws, rigo-

† Gal. 4. 3. 9. * Acts. 10. 28. † Ga'. 5. 1. 3. 23.

nor remain irreconcileable towards the most heinous offenders, but was ready to pardon the greatest sins, on sincere repentance and amendment of life; that he loved a purer devotion, a perfecter righteousness, a more extensive charity, than the letter of the *jewish* law prescribed; and that he not only required such duties, but was willing to assist men in the performance thereof, by teaching and admonishing them, enlightening their minds, enflaming their affections, directing and exciting them to obedience. But tho' that morning of divine knowledge did, by degrees, increase, yet the whole of God's will was not then disclosed. All which considerations plainly evince, that God did not intend the *jewish* law for a complete discovery of his mind, since we find, that a future state, and immortality itself, was not fully declared by the prophets; that the better covenant, established upon better assurances, was not yet revealed; that all means requisite for the glory of God, and the good of men, were not then thoroughly provided for.

Let me add, that *judaism* did not sufficiently tend to dispose men's minds to any tolerable degree of true sanctity, piety, and righteousness of life.

What do their prophetical writings contain besides pathetical expostulations, severe reproofs, dreadful threatenings of judgment upon them, for their prodigious impieties, and iniquities. They are called, *a sinful nation, a people laden with iniquities, a seed of evil doers; the land was defiled with the inhabitants thereof; from the soul of the foot even to the head, there was no soundness in the body of that nation* *. They were corrupt and did abominable works; there was none that did good, no not one †. The law, tho' inculcated and urged upon them with the greatest vehemence and diligence, continually proved ineffectual to produce the fruits of piety and righteousness;

* Isai. i. 4, 5, 6. † Psal. 14. 53.

righteousness ; and therefore God in his providence, designed that this law should be laid aside, as being unfit, either to serve his glory, or promote the good of men.

Such a dispensation, however good for those times and persons, is very unfit now, when philosophy, learning, and higher improvements of reason, have a more general influence over the minds of men, to relish and digest a more perfect institution.

Lastly, as the *jewish* religion was particular in respect to the persons to whom it was directed and did oblige ; as it was partial and incomplete in its frame, so was it to be temporary and mutable. This conclusion may be inferred from its small extent and intrinsic imperfection. For supposing a new, general, and perfect revelation made to mankind, such as the *christian*, and which we have proved to be probable ; as this comprehends and also supplies the defects of all former ones, it must needs render all others useless.

But this may be more convincingly demonstrated, by those many intimations, and express predictions which God has afforded us, that he designed in due time to make a great change in affairs of this kind, to refine and reform the state of things, to enlarge the bounds of his dominion, and receive all nations into his love and favour ; by dispensing a general, full revelation of his mind, grace and good will, to mankind. Thus the holy writings of that people acquaint us, that God intended to raise up another prophet like to Moses, *which should have words by God put in his mouth* †, whom at the peril of their lives, they should be obliged to hearken, to give attention and obedience unto. (Which most certainly means a new revelation from God ; or why should he be sent with that solemnity, only to publish old laws ?) That *the days should come, when the lord would*

† Deut. 18. 15. 18. Acts 3. 23.

would make a new covenant with the house of Israel *, and different from that he made with their fathers after their delivery from Egypt ; not to be written on stones, but impressed on mens hearts. We may therefore well argue with the apostle, *If the first covenant had been faultless †*, and designed to abide in force, *there would have been no place found for the second* ; by his thus speaking of a new covenant, he intimated his intention of abolishing the old one. That the time would come, when God should give them pastors according to his own heart, which should feed them with knowledge and understanding ‡ ; but in a way very different from the jewish institution. That another priesthood should be infallibly established, not after the order of Aaron, to offer carnal sacrifices, but after the order of Melchisedeck || to impart spiritual benedictions. That time should be, when God would gather all nations and tongues, and they should come and see his glory ** ; and out of them God would take priests and levites, which was what the mosaical constitution did not permit. That God would pour his spirit of prophecy upon all flesh ; that the earth should be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the lord, as the waters cover the sea †. But as the prophetical spirit hath long deserted the jewish nation, they surely can never pretend to any such knowledge. That God would send him, so much wanted and desired by ¶¶ all nations, to whom the gathering of the people should be, the sun of righteousness arising with salvation in his wings ; the redeemer that should come to Sion ; the messenger of the covenant, whom God would give for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth ; to reign and prosper, executing judgment and justice in the earth ; whose name shall be called, the lord

* Jerem. 31. 31. † Heb. 8. 7, 13. ‡ Jer. 3. 16.

|| Psal. 110. 4. ** Isai. 66. 18, 21. † Joel 2. 28.

Hab. 2. 14. ¶¶ Hag. 2. 7. Gen. 49. 10. Mal. 1

3. 4. Isai. 59. 20. 49. 8. Jer. 23. 5, 6.

lord our righteousness ; whom God would anoint to preach good tidings to the meek, and bind up the broken-hearted. The meaning of all which is, that God in due time would send the *Messiah* to enlighten the world with a perfect instruction ; to reveal his will and declare his mercy to mankind ; to erect an universal spiritual kingdom in the minds and hearts of men, that they might more fully know and obey God. So that these places of scripture do sufficiently evince, that the *mosaical* dispensation was in the design thereof mutable and transitory. And as it appears that God intended the abolition of this religion, so we see the same manifested. His providence hath not only disengaged men from that religion, but even discountenanced it, by preventing them from exercising and practising it according to its primitive rules and prescriptions. Since for above fifteen hundred years the *Jews* have been exiled from their ancient country, and dispersed over the world, wanting a place wherein to perform those most weighty parts of their worship and service to God ; such as oblation of sacrifices, incense, and tythes. And their tribes being confounded, the distinction of priesthood and people seems to be removed ; all the mysterious emblems of God's special presence, all the tokens of God's favour and endearment to them, are also quite lost ; nothing substantial or solemn in their religion is left for them to put in practice if they would. All that they retain of their ancient institution is the observance of a few things of less importance, and these they have so blended and corrupted with impure mixtures of their own devising, with false and impious opinions, ridiculous and idle ceremonies, that genuine *judaism* is no where to be found, nor indeed any where practised. So that what reason shewed fit to be, God hath performed, and experience doth confirm to have been done ; I mean the cessation and abolition ;

abolition of the Jewish religion, both as to obligation and use.

Thus have I clearly evinced, that no other religion except christianity, which is now in being, can reasonably pretend to have proceeded from God, as a universal, compleat and final declaration of his mind and will to mankind. Such as we have shewn is probable, that so wise a God, so just a Lord, so gracious a Father, would some time or other afford to his poor miserable creatures and children, the sons *Adam*. My next discourse shall be to prove, that christianity is in itself a doctrine and law endued with all the before-mentioned conditions, in every respect worthy to come from God, as it really did, and tending to promote his glory, and the benefit of mankind.

DISCOURSE XI. *Barrow.*

Of the excellency of the christian religion.

I Cor. 2. 6.

We shall speak wisdom to those which are perfect.

THE meaning of these words I take to be this; ‘ that however some parts of the christian doctrine, which St. Paul discovered unto those whom he instructed therein, without the advantages of subtle reasoning or elegant language, might seem to persons really ignorant, or be thought foolish and unreasonable by men possessed with contrary notions and corrupt affections; yet that the whole doctrine when entirely disclosed unto perfect men, such as are of

' of adult and improved understandings, void of prejudice and free from vicious dispositions, would appear *wisdom*; that is, not only exactly true, but highly important and well adapted to attain the best ends, even such as are manifestly the most excellent, namely, the glorifying of God, and the salvation of men?" This seems to be the meaning of St. Paul's assertion; and from hence I will endeavour briefly to represent, some of the peculiar excellencies and perfections of the christian religion, whereby the truth and wisdom thereof will be fully evinced.

The first excellency peculiar to the christian doctrine, is, that it gives us a true, proper, and compleat character or notion of God; such as perfectly agrees with what the best reason dictates, the works of nature declare, ancient tradition doth attest, and common experience testify: Such a character as tends to produce in us love and reverence towards God, and to engage us to the strictest duty and obedience. It ascribes unto him the highest and greatest perfections of nature. In his essence it represents him one, eternal, perfectly simple and pure, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent independent, impossible, and immutable; also as to his will and manner of acting, most absolute and free, good and benign, holy and just, true and faithful. It acknowledges him the maker and preserver of all beings, both material and immaterial, visible and invisible. It attributes to him supreme majesty and authority over all; it informs us, that he framed this visible world for our use and benefit, preserving it, and governing us, with a particular care and providence. It discovers to us, that he deals very tenderly with rational creatures, being exceedingly careful of their good, most beneficent and merciful towards them; that he compassionates their sufferings, is inclinable and ready to help them in their

their need, and to pardon their offences, if they earnestly desire and apply to him for it ; and yet not so, as to indulge them in any wicked practices ; he being impartially just, and inflexible severe, towards all who obstinately persist in their iniquities. In short, it describes him most amiable in his goodness, most terrible in his justice, most glorious and righteous in all his ways of providence. In the christian doctrine, there is nothing intermixed unworthy of, or misbecoming God, nothing added which is repugnant to what natural light discerns and approves ; tho' it discovers something which that could not, concerning God's incomprehensible nature and manner of existence, his unsearchable counsels of wisdom, his admirable methods of providence, whereby he displays his goodness and glorifies his justice. And as it became God to reveal these truths which were not in the power of man to comprehend, so they wonderfully conspiring with those perfections of God which are otherwise discernable by us, do most evidently confirm the divinity of them. For as the gospel relates nothing of divine things contradictory to reason, tho' it informs us of many particulars which no man's understanding could ever conceive and penetrate ; we may therefore justly presume it came from a superior wisdom, and to be worthy of God. That God should send down his eternal son to partake of our nature and appear in our flesh, that he might thereby with the utmost advantage discover God's merciful intention towards us, and set before us an exact pattern of good life ; that by his obedience and patience he might expiate our sins and reconcile us to God, also raise in us a hope of, and lead us in the way to eternal happiness ; this is indeed a mystery, a depth of wisdom, far exceeding our thought or contrivance, and which, tho' not contrary to reason, yet is what we may better

better admire, than we can understand. O let us on the occasion say with *Job* and the *Psalmist*, *Lord what is man that thou shouldest thus magnify and set thy heart upon him, or the son of man, that thou makest such account of him?* Job 7. 17. Psal.

144. 3.

And thus to instil into the minds of men a right and worthy notion of God, is most evidently a great excellency of any doctrine or religion; for according to men's conceptions of God, their practice whether religious or moral will be very much regulated. If men conceive well of God, that will induce them to render him such worship and obedience, as is worthy of, and acceptable to him; if they are ignorant of, or mistaken about him, they will perform such services, as will neither become nor please him.

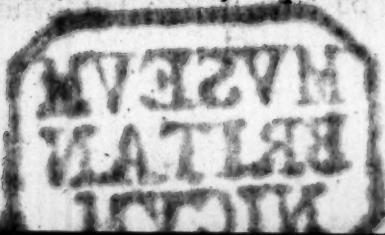
A second great excellency, peculiar to the christian religion, is, that it gives us a faithful account of ourselves, concerning our nature, original and end; of our state past, present and to come; points about which no reason, history or experience could ever otherwise resolve or satisfy us in. It teaches us that we consist of a frail and mortal body, fashioned by God out of the earth, and of an immortal spirit derived from heaven, whereby we understand the dignity of our nature, the great obligations we lie under to God, and how we ought to behave both towards him and ourselves, answerable to and worthy of such a high birth and quality. It informs us that we were originally designed by a voluntary obedience to glorify our maker, and by so doing to partake of his eternal joy and felicity; and that we were accordingly created in a state agreeable to those purposes, fit to serve God, and capable thereby to continue for ever happy; but that by our wilful disobedience we lapsed from the race, into a wretched state of blindness, disorder, frailty

frailty, sorrow, and trouble. It farther acquaints us, how being thus alienated from God, and exposed to the effects of his just displeasure, we are yet again by his exceeding mercy and favour put into a capacity of being far more happy than we were before, if we will return unto God and comply with his revealed will; or, if we obstinately continue in our degeneracy and disobedience, that we shall most assuredly plunge ourselves deeper into an abyss of endless misery. It fully represents to us, what shall be our future state and final doom, according to our demeanor and deserts in this life; what a strict trial, a severe judgment all our actions, even our passing words and most secret thoughts, must hereafter undergo, and how we shall be either exceedingly happy or extremely miserable for ever. It is this doctrine only which fully resolves us, wherein the final end and happiness of man consisteth, and what is the way of attaining it; assuring us it consists, not in a confluence of temporal things, but in the favour and enjoyment of God; and that this happiness is only to be obtained by a sincere and constant obedience to God's holy laws, by the practice of such piety and virtue as this doctrine prescribes. These important truths, so useful to satisfy our minds and direct our lives, are in the gospel very clearly revealed; namely, that man was at first made in a happy state, and fell from thence by his misbehaviour; that he afterwards became prone to vice and subject to pain; that our souls survive the body; and that after this life there shall be a day of reckoning and judgment, according to which good men who are here often much afflicted, shall be then rewarded with joy and glory; and bad men who commonly prosper here, shall be severely punished; these are points that the wisest men have always surmised, yet could not be certain of: but whose rational conjectures



conjectures our religion doth positively and expressly assert and establish.

Another peculiar excellency of our religion is, that it prescribes an accurate rule of life, most agreeable to reason and to our nature, most conducive to our welfare and content, tending to procure each man's private good, and to promote the public benefit of all, by the strict observance whereof we bring our human nature to a resemblance of the divine; and we shall also thereby obtain God's favour, oblige and benefit men, and procure to ourselves the conveniences of a sober life, and the pleasure of a good conscience. For if we examine the precepts which respect our duty to God, what can be more just, pleasant or beneficial to us, than are those duties of piety which our religion enjoins? What is more fit and reasonable, than that we should most highly esteem and honour him, who is most excellent? That we should bear the sincerest affection for him, who is perfect goodness himself, and most beneficial to us? That we should have the most awful dread of him, that is infinitely powerful holy and just? That we should be very grateful to him, from whom we received our being, with all the comforts and conveniences of it? That we should entirely trust and hope in him, who can and will do whatever we may in reason expect from his goodness, nor can he ever fail to perform his promises? That we should render all due obedience to him, whose children, servants and subjects we are? Can there be a higher privilege than to have liberty of access to him, who will favourably hear, and is fully able to supply our wants? Can we desire to receive benefits on easier terms than the asking for them? Can a more gentle satisfaction for our offences be required, than confession of them, repentance, and strong resolutions



Resolutions to amend them ? the practice of such a piety, of a service so reasonable, cannot but be of vast advantage to us, as it procures peace of conscience, a comfortable hope, a freedom from all terrors and scruples of mind, from all tormenting cares and anxieties.

And if we consider the precepts by which our religion regulates our carriage and behaviour towards our neighbours, and brethren, what can be imagined so good and useful, as those which the gospel affords ? It enjoins us sincerely and tenderly to love one another ; earnestly to desire and delight in each others good ; heartily to sympathize with all the evils and sorrows of our brethren ; readily affording them all the help and comfort we are able ; willingly to part with our substance, ease and pleasure for their benefit and relief ; not confining this our charity to particular friends and relations ; but, in conformity to the boundless goodness of almighty God, extending it to all. It requires us mutually to bear with one another's infirmities, mildly to resent and freely remit all injuries ; retaining no grudge, nor executing no revenge, but requiting our enemies with good wishes and good deeds. It commands us to be quiet in our stations, diligent in our callings, true in our words, upright in our dealings, observant of our relations, obedient and respectful to our superiors, meek and gentle to our inferiors, modest and lowly, ingenuous and condescending in our conversation, candid in our censures, and innocent, inoffensive, and obliging in our behaviour towards all persons. It enjoins us to root out of our hearts all envy and malice, all pride and haughtiness ; to restrain our tongues from all slander, detraction, reviling, bitter and harsh language ; not to injure, hurt, or needlessly trouble our neighbour. It engages us to prefer the public good before our own opinion, humour, advantage or convenience.

venience. And would men observe and practice what this excellent doctrine teaches ; how sociable, secure, and pleasant a life might we lead ! what a paradise would this world then become, in comparison to what it now is ?

If we farther survey the laws and directions of our religion, with regard to the management of our souls and bodies, we shall also find that nothing could be devised more worthy of us, more agreeable to reason, or more productive of our welfare. It obliges us to preserve unto our reason its natural prerogative and due empire ; not to suffer the brutish part to usurp and domineer over us ; not to be enslaved to bodily temper, or deluded by vain fancy, to commit that which is unworthy of, or mischievous to us. It enjoins us to have sober and moderate thoughts concerning ourselves, suitable to our total dependance on God, to our natural meanness, weakness and sinful inclinations ; and that we should not be puffed up with self-conceit, or vain confidence in our wealth, honour, and prosperity. It directs us to compose our minds into a calm, serene, and cheerful state ; that we should not easily be moved with anger, distracted with care or trouble, nor disturbed with any accident, but that we should learn to be content in every condition, and patiently bear all events that may happen to us. It commands us to restrain our appetites, to be temperate in our enjoyments ; to abstain from all irregular pleasures, which may corrupt our minds, impair our health, lessen our estate, stain our good name, or prejudice our repose. It doth not prohibit us the use of any creature, that is innocent, convenient, or delightful ; but indulgeth us a prudent and sober use of them, so as we are thankful to God, whose goodness bestows them. It orders us to sequester our minds from the fading glories, unstable possessions, and vanishing delights of this world ;

world ; things which are unworthy the attention and affection of an immortal spirit ; and that we should fix our thoughts, desires and endeavours on heavenly and spiritual objects, which are infinitely pure, stable and durable : not to love the world and the things therein, but to cast all our care on God's providence ; not to trust in uncertain riches, but to have our treasure, our heart, hope, and conversation in heaven. And as our religion delivers a most excellent and perfect rule of life, so it chiefly requires from us a rational and spiritual service. The ritual observances it enjoins are in number few, in nature easy to perform, also very reasonable, decent and useful ; apt to instruct us in, and excite us to the practice of our duty. And our religion hath this farther peculiar advantage, that it sets before us a living copy of good practice. Example yields the most compendious instruction, the most efficacious incitement to action : and never was there any example so perfect in itself, so fit for our imitation, as that of our blessed saviour ; intended by him to conduct us thro' all the parts of duty, especially in those most high and difficult ones, that of charity, self-denial, humility and patience. His practice was suited to all degrees and capacities of men, and so tempered, that persons of all callings might easily follow him in the paths of righteousness, in the performance of all substantial duties towards God and man. It is also an example attended with the greatest obligations and inducements to follow it, whether we consider the great excellency and dignity of the person, (who was the most holy son of God) or our manifold relations to him, being our lord and master, our best friend and most gracious redeemer ; or the inestimable benefits we have received from him, even redemption from extreme misery, and being put into a capacity of the most perfect happiness ; all

which are so many potent arguments engaging us to imitate him.

Again, our religion doth not only fully acquaint us with our duty, but, which is another peculiar virtue thereof, it builds the same on the most solid foundation. Indeed ancient philosophers have highly commended virtue, and earnestly recommended the practice of it; but the grounds on which they laid its praise, and the arguments used to enforce its practice, were very weak; also the principles from whence it was deduced, and the ends they proposed, were poor and mean, if compared with ours. But the christian doctrine recommends goodness to us, not only as agreeable to man's imperfect and fallible reason, but as conformable to the perfect goodness, infallible wisdom, and most holy will of God; and which is enjoined us by his unquestionable authority, as our indispensable duty, and the only way to happiness. The principles from whence it directs our actions, are love, reverence, and gratitude to God; good will to men, and a due regard to our own welfare. The ends which it prescribes are God's honour, and the salvation of men; it excites us to the practice of virtue, by reminding us that we shall thereby resemble the supreme goodness, express our gratitude to our great benefactor, discharge our duty to our almighty lord and king; that we shall thereby avoid the wrath and displeasure of God, and certainly obtain his favour, mercy, and every blessing necessary for us; that we shall escape not only the terrors of conscience here, but future endless misery and torment; that we shall procure not only present comfort and peace of mind, but acquire crowns of everlasting glory and bliss. These are the firmest grounds on which virtue can subsist, and the most effectual motives to the embracing of it.

Another peculiar advantage of christianity, and which no other law or doctrine could ever pretend to

to, is, that as it clearly teaches and strongly persuades us to so excellent a way of life, so it sufficiently enables us to practise it; without which, such is the frailty of our nature, that all instruction, exhortation and encouragement would little avail. The christian law is no *dead letter*, but hath a *quickening spirit* attending it. It sounds the ear and strikes the heart of him who sincerely embraces it. To all good men it is a sure guide, and safety from all evil. If our minds are dark or doubtful, it directs us to a faithful oracle, where we may receive counsel and information; if our passions and appetites are unruly and outragious; if temptations are violent and threaten to overbear us; it leads us to a full magazine, where we may supply ourselves with all proper arms to withstand and subdue them. If our condition is disconsolate or desperate, here we may apply for relief and assistance: for on our earnest seeking and asking, it offers us the wisdom and power of God himself to direct, assist, support and comfort us in all exigencies. To them, who with due fervency and constancy ask it, God hath promised in the gospel, to grant his *holy spirit**; to direct them in their ways, to admonish them of their duty, to strengthen them in obedience, to secure them from temptations, to support them in affliction. As this is peculiar to our religion, so it is of considerable advantage. For what would the more perfect rule signify, without power to observe, and knowledge to discern it? and how can a creature so ignorant, impotent, and inconstant as man; who is so easily deluded by false appearances, and transported with disorderly passions; know how to conduct himself, without some guide and assistance; or how to prosecute what is good for him, especially, in cases of intricacy and difficulty? how can such an one continue in a good state, or recover himself from a bad

one, or attain any virtuous habit, did he not apprehend such a friendly power ready on all occasions to guard and defend him? It is this consideration only that can nourish our hope, excite our courage, and quicken our endeavours in religious practice; as it assures us that there is no duty so hard, which by God's grace we may not perform, and no enemy so mighty which, by his help, we cannot conquer; for tho' we are not able to do any thing of ourselves, yet we *can do all things by Christ that strengthens us.* Phil. 4. 13.

Our religion doth farther declare, that God is not only reconcileable, but desirous to be our friend, making overtures of grace to us, and offering a full pardon for all crimes we have committed. It assures us, that if we be careful to amend, God will not be *extreme to mark what is done amiss;* that tho' by our infirmity we often fall, yet by our repentance, we may rise again; that our endeavours to please God, tho' imperfect and defective, yet if serious and sincere, will be accepted by him. This is the tenor of that great covenant between heaven and earth, which the son of God procured by his intercession, purchased by his wonderful patience and meritorious obedience, ratified and sealed by his blood, published to mankind, and confirmed the truth thereof by many wonderful miracles. Thus is our religion an inestimable benefit, and unspeakable comfort to all who sincerely embrace and firmly adhere to it; because it gives ease to their conscience, and encourages them in the practice of their duty.

The last advantage I shall mention, peculiar to the christian doctrine, is the stile and manner of its speech, which is properly accommodated to the capacity of all persons, and worthy the majesty and sincerity of divine truth. It expresseth itself plainly and simply, without any affectation or artifice,

free, ostentation of wit or eloquence. It speaks with an imperious awful confidence, in the strain of a king ; its words carrying with them authority and power divine, commanding attention, assent and obedience : as this you are to believe, this you are to do, on pain of our high displeasure, and at your utmost peril ; for even your life and salvation depend thereon. Such is the stile and tenor of the scripture, such as plainly becomes the sovereign lord of all to use, when he is pleased to proclaim his mind and will to us his creatures.

As God is in himself invisible, and that we could not bear the lustre and glory of his immediate presence, if ever he would convincingly signify his will and pleasure to us, it must be by effects of his incommunicable power, by works extraordinary and supernatural ; and innumerable such hath God afforded in favour and countenance of our religion : as his clearly predicting the future revelation of this doctrine, by express voices and manifest apparitions from heaven ; by frequently suspending the course of natural causes ; by remarkable instances of providence ; by internal attestations on the minds and consciences of men ; by such wonderful means doth God demonstrate that the christian religion came from him ; an advantage peculiar to it, and such as no other institution, except that of the Jews, which was a prelude to it, could ever reasonably pretend to. I hope these considerations will be sufficient to vindicate our religion from all aspersions cast on it, by inconsiderate, vain, and dissolute persons, as also to confirm us in the esteem and excite us to the practice thereof.

And if men of wit would lay aside their prejudices, reason would compel them to confess, that the heavenly doctrines and laws of Christ, established by innumerable miracles ; his compleatly holy

and pure life; his meekness, charity, and entire submission to the will of God in his death, and his wonderful resurrection from the state of the dead, are most unquestionable evidences of the divinity of his person, of the truth of his gospel, and of the obligation that lies upon us, thankfully to accept him for our redeemer and saviour, on the gracious terms he has proposed. To love God with all our souls, who is the maker of our beings, and to love our neighbours as ourselves, who bear his image; as they are the sum and substance of the christian religion, so are they duties fitted to our nature, and most agreeable to our reason. And therefore as the obtaining the love, favour and kindness of God, should be the chief and ruling principle in our hearts, the first thing in our consideration, as what ought to govern all the purposes and actions of our lives; so we cannot possibly have more powerful motives to godliness, righteousness, justice, equity, meekness, humility, temperance and chastity; or greater dissuasives and discouragement from all kinds of sin, than what the holy scriptures afford us. If we will fear and reverence God, love our enemies who despitefully use us, and do good in all our capacities, we are promised that our reward shall be very great; that we shall be the children of the most high, that we shall be inhabitants of the everlasting kingdom of heaven, where there is laid up for us a crown of righteousness, of life and glory.

To conclude; let us strive to walk worthy of our holy profession and high calling in Christ Jesus, and answer the great ends of his incarnation, and dwelling among us. Let us diligently imitate the virtues of his life, and abhor the committing those sins, for the expiation of which he submitted to a bloody and ignominious death. Let the consideration of his resurrection from the grave and ascension into heaven, strengthen our faith and hope of im-

immortality, mortify and destroy in us all evil concupiscence and fleshly lusts, and raise our affections to things above, that in God's fit time we may inherit everlasting life. May the God of patience enable us to resist the most alluring temptations, and quietly bear the greatest afflictions, rather than wound our consciences, and make shipwreck of the faith. May the God of consolation, give us will and strength to endure all labours and weariness in running to the end of our Christian race, that having preserved our innocence and purity thro' the stage of our lives, at Christ's second coming we may obtain everlasting bliss and glory ; *which God of his infinite mercy grant, &c.*

DISCOURSE XII.

The Jews expectation of a Messiah, accomplished in *Christ*, the only Saviour of the world ; with practical observations.

Luke 2. 32.

A light to lighten the gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.

THAT the expectation of a *Messiah* was entertained and very prevalent among the *Jews*, and many of the neighbouring nations, about the time of our Lord's appearing on earth, is very evident, both from sacred and profane historians. When *John* the baptist came preaching in the wilderness, *all men mused in their hearts concerning him, whether he were the Christ or not* †; which implies, that the general expectation of the people was,

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the

† *Luke 3. 15.*

the coming of Christ, and that it was at hand. The doubt raised in the Jews, whether, when the *Messiah* came, he would do greater miracles, than our Lord did *. The enquiry of the wise men at his birth, and the cruel massacre of the children upon that occasion, tho' founded in a mistaken notion of the power of this Saviour, and the nature of the deliverance he was to procure, are undeniable proofs that he was expected, and to be of the Jews. And the *Roman* historians, *Suetonius* and *Tacitus*, are very full and clear as to the prevalence of his expectation, that out of Judea should come those, who should get the government of the world.

The Jews had great reason for this hope, as God himself had been pleased to repeat his promises to them, of the mercies he would vouchsafe mankind in this deliverer; and that more frequently and clearly, as the time of his appearance drew nigh. This wonderful deliverance was the contrivance of infinite wisdom and goodness, which alone could give men reason to hope for this amazing instance of Divine love. And the same wisdom and goodness, gave such notices of it, at different times, and to different persons, as was proper to raise their expectations, prove their virtue, and try their faith in the divine promises. The first discovery was made to the first man, to raise him from fear and despondency; that *the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head* ||. And the sacrifice of the beasts was instituted in his time, probably in allusion to the blessings that were expected from the promised seed. To *Abraham*, the father of the faithful, God gave assurance, that from him should descend that promised seed, *in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed* †. *Jacob*, in some measure, foresaw the time of his coming, and the great expectation of the world; when he

* John 7. 31. || Gen. 3. 15. † Gen. 28. 14.

he foretold by the spirit of God, that the *sceptre* should not depart from Judah, nor the law-giver from between his feet, till this *Shiloh*, (*Messiah*, or *Saviour*) should come, unto whom the gathering of the nations should be †. And to *Moses* it was revealed, that this *Saviour* should be a prophet like unto himself, who was to publish a new law from God, and to be a mediator between God and his people. *Moses* tells the *Jews*, that the Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, like unto me, who shall speak all that the Lord shall command him *. When God spake the ten commandments to them from mount *Sinai*, they were struck with such dread at his tremendous majesty, that they said unto *Moses*, speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die ||. And when *Moses* declared their request to God, he was pleased to promise them, that he would comply with it. And in confirmation of this assurance, he gives them a clear knowledge of that *Saviour* whom they were to expect, by whom alone God would make a new revelation, in the following particulars; that he should be vailed with human nature, and be a man like unto themselves; be by nature a *Jew*, or raised up from among their brethren; and like *Moses*, be a mediator between God and man; and should, when he came, declare the whole counsel of God ‡.

From *Moses* to *Samuel* there was no vision concerning him; and from *Samuel* to *David* there is nothing recorded of the *Messiah*; but the royal prophet declared many particulars of this great event. From his days the revelation grew brighter and clearer, till the time of the latter prophets, who by vision so fully declared this *Saviour*, as that any pious and impartial enquirer into their predictions might easily

† Gen. 49. 10. * Deut. 18. 15, 18. || Exod. 20. 19.
Deut. 18. 15, 18. 1 Tim. 2. 5. acts 20. 27.

sily know him, when he came. They foretold the time, place, and manner of his appearance. They declare his office and design, also describe his person. The great characters they gave of him are, that he should be God upon earth; that he should fully instruct and mercifully guide his people; that he should, by suffering for them, redeem them from the miserable consequences of their sins; and having triumphed over all his enemies, should obtain a kingdom, and reign there for ever and ever.

That he should be God upon earth, *Isaiah* and *Micah* are express. *For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulders. His name shall be called, (or be) wonderful counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father* †: Again, *a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel, which being interpreted is God with us* *; and the prophet *Micah* tells us, that he who should *come from Bethlehem Ephratah, to be a ruler in Israel*, that is the *Messiah*, should be one, *whose goings forth have been of old, even from everlasting* ||.

That he should fully instruct his people in sacred things is most clearly foretold. In his time, the *earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea* ‡. *He shall feed his flock like a shepherd* †. That the *Messiah* should, by suffering, redeem men from their sins, the same prophet informs us, that he was *to be wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities, and that thro' his stripes we are healed* **; and that notwithstanding this, the same *Messiah* should triumph over his enemies, and obtain an everlasting kingdom, is the language of almost all the prophets. As, *a king he shall reign and prosper* ††; *he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne* |||; and *one king shall be*

† Isa. 9. 6. 7. 14. * Mat. 1. 23. || Mic. 5. 2.

‡ Hab. 2. 14. † Isai. 40. 11. ** Isai. 53. 5. †† Zech.

6. 13. ||| Jer. 2. 5.

be king to them all. That is to all nations, both to *Jews* and *Gentiles**. And of the *increase of his government* there shall be no end; but he shall order and establish it, with judgment and with justice, even for ever†. Thus we see the gradual openings of this important truth; by what degrees, and in what manner, it pleased God to prepare the world for the reception of his eternal son; and what reason the *Jews*, and all others who were acquainted with the prophetic writings, had to expect a saviour, who should bring salvation to his people, and be both *a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel*. But it will be proper to shew, that the blessed Jesus, when he came, did fully answer all the well grounded expectations, (I mean such as were built on the sense and meaning of the prophets) which the *Jews* entertained concerning the person of their deliverer. Indeed, they fatally misconstrued some of the before quoted passages, by interpreting them of a temporal kingdom, and vainly expected, that the *Messiah* should raise them to the empire of the world, and establish them in it for ever. This blinded their eyes, hardened their hearts against their deliverer when he appeared, and led them to fulfil the counsel of God, decreed from the beginning, by despising and crucifying the Lord of life. Whereas had they duly attended to the signs of his coming, and searched the prophets, they would have seen a wonderful agreement between their ancient predictions, and the birth, life, death and sufferings of the blessed Jesus; and have known their *Messiah* when he came, and readily have confessed, that our Lord was indeed the *Christ*, the *saviour of the world*‡.

Our saviour appeared at the time fixed for the *Messiah's* coming, and was born in the place and manner

* Ezek. 37. 22. † Isai. 9. 7. ‡ John 4. 42.

manner described by the prophets. The sceptre was departing from *Judah* at his birth, and the seventy weeks of *Daniel* were not expired. He was born of a virgin in the town of *Bethlehem Judah*, of the lineage of *Abraham*, and of the family of *David*. He was like *Moses*; a prophet, *mighty in word and deed*; and he taught the people, with dignity, authority and power. He brought the world the glad tidings of peace with God; and so spake as never man before spake, even the words of eternal life*. His whole conduct was one continued act of love to wretched man; and his character that of wisdom, meakness and patience. He preached the good tidings of the Gospel to the poor, proclaimed liberty to the captives, comforted all that mourned, and bound up the broken hearted †. — He was the eternal son, a person in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily ‡, and proved himself to be such by signs and mighty wonders. He knew all things even the heart of man; all nature was obedient to him, and the power of darkness fled before him.

He reconciled fallen man to his offended God; bore the weight of his father's anger to the whole human race; and washed away the sins of the whole world, by his blood. To this end he became a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief ||; was any sorrow like unto his sorrow, when the iniquities of the sons of men lay upon him and he made atonement to God, for his guilty creatures, and redeemed us from death, not temporal, but eternal? By his meritorious sufferings he likewise purchased for his faithful servants, mansions of bliss in his father's kingdom. Thus was he a saviour and mighty deliverer, not in a temporal, but a spiritual and most glorious sense, by delivering

* John 7. 46, 6, 68. † Isai. 51. 1. ‡ 1 Col. 2. 9.
|| Isai. 53. 3.

men from evils the most suffering and insupportable, and by purchasing for them bliss inconceivable and eternal. Infinite love could not exert itself imperfectly ; temporal enjoyments were a purchase unworthy the sufferings of the son of God ; nothing less could be the end of his sufferings, than the averting the fury of an angry God, and purchasing the most perfect happiness the redeemed could possibly enjoy.

And when he had thus perfected our deliverance, he then entered upon his own kingdom, *He ascended up into heaven, and is sat down at the right hand of God ; angels and principalities, and powers being made subject unto him.* 1 Pet. 3. 22. He is become one king not only to Jew and Gentile, but to all the host of heaven. For all power is given unto him in heaven and earth, and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Mat. 28. 18. Luke 1. 33. Thus we see in how wonderful and complete a manner, the predictions of the prophets are fulfilled in him ; and may from hence observe, what an harmony and agreement there is, between the old and new testament ; and how necessary one is to clear up and explain the difficulties, dark and mysterious sayings of the other. A sufficient proof to any considerate, unprejudiced man, that the same spirit dictates both. Such is the blessed Jesus our saviour in whom we believe and trust ; by whose blood our guilt is washed away, by whose merits our defects are supplied, by whose spirit we are sanctified, and by whose grace we stand. Such is our mediator betwen God and us, who receives our prayers, and offers them to the father ; who daily and powerfully makes intercession for us ; who showers down blessings from above on his faithful servants ; who will govern, support, and comfort all that come to him ; and who invites

us, and all mankind to glory inexpressible and inconceivable, and which shall never end.

Let us next consider the nature of that deliverance which Christ has obtained; and by what means, and for whom he has obtained it; and I will shew that this salvation, in the fullest sense of the word, is purchased and procured by him, for every man, who will believe in and obey him.

— Salvation, tho' in the strict and proper sense, imports no more than deliverance, or preservation from any sort of evil, yet when applied to the blessed Jesus, it signifies his procuring for us all kinds of good; because, the salvation he has purchased for us, is the most perfect happiness, of which the nature of man is capable. This will appear from hence, that the happiness purchased for the faithful christian, consists in knowing as much of God, as the mind of man can contain; in being made as like God as any human creature can be; and in enjoying as much of the glory of God, as the faculties of our soul will permit.

The happiness of man consists in the happiness of his mind; and as knowledge is one ingredient therein, the more noble and excellent that knowledge is, the greater and more exalted must that happiness be. And surely there is no knowledge so excellent, as the knowledge of the nature, wisdom, and works of the infinite and eternal God, from whom all knowledge and happiness are derived. And our favour has already begun to impart this happiness to the faithful christian, by the discoveries he and his apostles have made, of the nature of God, and of the astonishing instances of his mighty love, care and concern, for creatures so low, so wretched, and so unworthy of his love, as the sinful sons of men. — That God the father should adopt, God the son redeem, and God the Holy Ghost sanctify us miserable men,

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are truths only known to whom the son shall reveal them ; truths alone sufficient to raise, fill and transport the considerate mind, with admiration, love and joy. And if such truths afford here to a well disposed mind such inexpressible comfort, how perfect must the happiness of such be hereafter, when they shall truly *know*, as they themselves are known. Again, the happiness, purchased by our blessed saviour, will be yet more perfect, as it will partly consist in our being as like God, as our human nature can permit. We cannot indeed resemble the almighty in his infinity, his self-sufficiency, or necessary existence ; but we may attain to a faint resemblance of him in his other attributes ; we may imitate his goodness by doing all the good we can, we may extend our benevolence, and become like God, in an universal, generous love for every being he has made, and rejoice in their welfare. This unbounded charity the gospel commands ; this will prepare us for the regions of bliss, and render that salvation perfect, which the son of God has purchased for us. But,

This salvation obtained by Christ, is not for one nation, or order of men, but for all who believe in and obey him. The Jewish dispensation was in a great measure confined to that people ; but the christian is more general and beneficial ; adapted to the use, and designed for the present comfort and future glory of all, who comply with the terms it proposes. It offers comfort to all who sincerely desire and seek it, and promises salvation to all who will be reformed and perfected. It speaks peace and joy, pardon and forgiveness to the penitent of every people and nation, who will embrace it. Making no distinction among men, but that of believers and unbelievers, penitent and impenitent ; for *in Jesus Christ, neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but faith*

*faith, which worketh by love**. Whoever does well, will be accepted, and whoever rejects it, sin must lie at his door. For there is no mediator between God and us, but this *Messiah* the saviour; nor any other name or means whereby we may be saved, but that atonement which he has made, whereby he has brought us *Gentiles* near to God, and joined us with the believing *Jews*; to be one sheepfold under him, the only true *shepherd and bishop of our souls*. Which leads me to shew, that the means whereby Christ, obtained this salvation, was by paying that price which God was pleased to require for the redemption of mankind, from the guilt and punishment of sin.

When man had disobeyed the laws of his maker, and by him forfeited his title to eternal happiness, God was pleased to declare by what means, and upon what terms, he should be restored to the divine favour. As the sinner could not complain, had he suffered the punishment due to his sin, so he cannot but rejoice and be thankful, if he can escape that punishment, on any terms; either to be performed by, or for him, how strange soever those terms may appear. And this is the case with respect to the great work of our redemption thro' Christ. It pleases the almighty God to make this the great foundation of the pardon of the sins of men, that his own eternal son should take the nature of man upon him, and suffer the death of a common malefactor; who graciously complied with this condition, and *took upon him the form of a servant, and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross**. And in order to prepare men the more easily to believe in a crucified saviour when he came, it pleased God, from the time the first man fell, to give him notice

* Gal. 5. 6. † Phil. 2. 8.

notice of this amazing instance of infinite love, and to raise his expectation of it. The sacrifices of beasts were likewise commanded by God as a visible *memento* of this great sacrifice; and by this practice mankind in general became persuaded, that God would not pardon sin, without some punishment, instead of the offender. Accordingly when our saviour was sent by God into the world, that the world thro' him might be saved †, he underwent that punishment for every man which God the father accepted, instead of the eternal death of the sinner; he redeemed us from the curse of the law, by being made a curse for us *, and by washing away the guilt of our iniquities in his own blood. This sacrifice was decreed before the foundations of the world; and in the fulness of time which God had appointed, this saviour was slain, and took away the sins of the world, by that blood, without which there is no remission for the sinful sons of men. This is the method of our reconciliation with God, that he was pleased to find out; in which there is nothing absurd or contrary to reason, but abundant matter of admiration, joy and love; nothing but what tends to heighten our conceptions of the purity of God, and his hatred of sin; nothing but what tends to vindicate his honour and maintain his dignity, as the great lawgiver of the world; nothing but what tends to inspire us with the greatest abhorrence of vice, the expiation of which required so great a sacrifice, and with the highest admiration of that infinite love, which did and suffered such great things for us. Indeed, we cannot fully comprehend the ways of God; but they are no more unsearchable in this, than in many other instances of his providential dispensations; which can only be resolved into his wisdom and goodness. And therefore we should not reject

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† John 3. 17.

* Gal. 3. 13.

facts and truths, which are undeniably proved, because we cannot comprehend the manner of them; but admire and adore that wisdom and love, which no man can know or comprehend; and to testify our gratitude and joy for the offered reconciliation, by a stedfast belief in our crucified Lord, and an immovable adherence to his gospel.

But as the death of the son of God was one condition of the forgiveness and recovery of sinful men; so are faith, repentance, and amendment required from them; and this not being absolutely in their own power, therefore the blessed Jesus has not only saved us from sin, but also enables us to perform those conditions, on which our happiness is built. This he does by the gracious assistances and comforts of his holy spirit. He enlightens, strengthens, and comforts the minds of the faithful. He opens their understandings to see the wonderful things of the law, he subdues the stubbornness of their wills, draws their affections to him, gives them such foretastes of the joys of heaven, and so fixes their minds on God and their duty, that they desire nothing upon earth with so much zeal, as to serve him and obtain his kingdom. And as this saviour thus enables us to perform the conditions required in order to this happiness, so he has power to bestow this happiness on those that believe in and obey him. After he had compleated the great work of our redemption, by his incarnation and sufferings, he ascended upon high, and is sat down at the right hand of God, angels, principalities and powers being made subject to him*. He is appointed the judge of quick and dead, and will distribute the crowns of glory which has purchased. — And when the heavens shall pass away with great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; when the earth, and all that is therein,

therein, shall be burnt up *, and the whole race of mankind, be summoned before the great tribunal: then shall this Saviour again appear in majesty and great glory, as their lord and judge, to execute vengeance on his enemies, and to save those to the uttermost, who come unto God thro' him, and have obeyed his gospel, and they will reign with him in the kingdom of his father for ever and ever.

But as Christ is a Saviour, so is he the only Saviour; salvation being to be had in his name alone. There is no mediator between God and man, but the Lord Jesus Christ. To him therefore must be our refuge for the remission of our sins, on him our dependence, and in his merits our confidence, to obtain everlasting life. God has declared no sufferings sufficient to satisfy his honour and justice, instead of the sinner, but those of his eternal son. And as his death is the only sufficient expiation for sin, and the only meritorious cause of salvation, it is necessary, that the sinner who partakes of it, should firmly believe and confide in it, as the only acceptable sacrifice which can be offered in his behalf. For salvation, or the perfect happiness of men, is the free gift of God, in and thro' his son; and he that hath not the son of God, hath not life, but the wrath of God abideth in him †.

Whether infinite wisdom and goodness might not have found out some other method of reconciliation, and have restored us to bliss, without any atonement of this kind, we are not concerned to know; our happiness depends not on what God could do, but on the belief of what he has done, and the performance of what he requires of us. It is therefore evident, that whatever God might have done, he will not now accept of any other atonement; and there is no other method of coming to him, no other name under heaven given by him, to man, where-

* Pet. 3. 10. 12. † 1 Tim. 2. 5. ‡ 1 John. 5. 12.
3. 6.

whereby they must be saved, but that of Jesus Christ; we must therefore confide in that holy name, or lose all title to that salvation. For when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, he will take vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power *.

But how far this atonement will be applied to those to whom it has not been revealed, the holy spirit has not declared, and therefore we ought not to *to be wise above that which is written*, but to leave *them* to God's uncovenanted mercies. This we know, that God is of infinite holiness, purity, and justice; that he will distribute his rewards with an equal and impartial hand; and finally punish no man further than shall be equal to his guilt. That the merits of Christ are as extensive as the guilt of Adam; which gives us good ground of hope that the virtuous heathen, who diligently follow the best light they have, will be blessed with a share of what was purchased by those merits, in proportion to their capacities and growth in virtue.

But as to those among us, who impiously reject the gospel, they can have no just cause to hope for the remission of their sins, much less to expect to partake of happiness in the world to come. God may and will bestow salvation on those who diligently seek him, and to the utmost of their opportunities and abilities sincerely endeavour to serve and obey him. But this is not the case of those who reject the gospel, and do all they can to affront the God of heaven to his face. They reject truths, which they know, or might have known, to have come from him, with all the evidence they are capable of receiving; and therefore this is *their condemnation*

|| Acts 4. 12. * 2 Thes. 1. 6, 7, 8.

demnation, that in the midst of light, *they chose darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil* ‡, and as they can have no just foundation for hope, from the impartial dictates of their own minds, so revelation, how silent soever of the state of those who *could not know it*, is very express in assigning to condemnation, in the most terrible and awaking terms, those who wilfully reject it. *He that believeth not the son of God, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth in him. He that believeth not shall be damned* ||.

Such is the present unhappy state, such will be the future inexpressible misery of those, who *professing themselves to be wise*, are manifestly guilty of the utmost folly, in rejecting that salvation which God offers them by his son. By thus acting, they forfeit their title to that satisfaction for sin, which infinite goodness has provided for them ; they despise the meritorious sufferings of the immaculate lamb, without pretending to any merit of their own ; they must acknowledge themselves sinners, and liable to divine vengeance, whilst that reason, on which they pretend to rely, cannot assure them they shall escape that vengeance ; and the revelation which they contemn, most terribly denounces, that it will inevitably overtake them. Thus have they no well grounded hope of obtaining the remission of their sins, nor any just expectation of any happiness in the world to come. The inferences I shall make from this discourse are, 1. The present uncertainty and misery of infidelity ; 2. The present joy and comfort of a steady faith ; 3. The necessity of our being always on our guard, lest we also fall from our steadfastness.

1. The present uncertainty and misery of infidelity. The advocates for reason, if they rely on that only, can have no great certainty of a future

state, and much less of their own happiness. The wisest and best of those, who know little or nothing of revelation, speak of it with great doubt and uncertainty ; and supposing it a certain principle, that God will reward and punish us hereafter, yet it is very uncertain from reason only, how great these rewards, and how lasting that punishment will be ; and consequently the infidel can only hope for he knows not what, and despise a punishment that may be inexpressible and eternal. And since he only can rationally hope for any happiness hereafter, who approves himself to God, by a right use of his abilities and opportunities ; no unbeliever therefore can have any just grounds of hope, but only he who having impartially weighed all the evidences of the christian faith, can satisfy his own conscience that they are *absolutely false*. And since they may possibly be true, how wretched must be a state of doubts and endless uncertainties, in things so important, and on which so much depends ! how deplorable must be their misery in life, who can have no just foundation for one hour's peace ? how inexpressible their anguish, when they come to die, to see *the terrors of God set in array against them !*

2. The second inference is the present joy and comfort of a steady faith. Christianity refuses us no joy which a wise man would chuse ; and no lasting substantial comfort can be had without it. When men can only look on their maker as an offended being, they must be perpetually disquieted with the fears of his power and resentment ; but when, by a steady adherence to his gospel, they know his anger is appeased, all within will be peace and serenity, and the soul will be filled with an inexhaustible fund of joy and consolation. The good christian's comfort must rise in proportion, as his mind is enlarged with these noble views. He knows and is assured, that the God of heaven is his protector,

tector, guardian and friend ; that he sends forth his holy angels to minister to him ; that the eternal son has appeared and suffered for him ; that the Holy Ghost will enlighten, support and assist him ; and that all these are but the foretastes of that endless glory, to which God's infinite goodness will infallibly conduct him. And what then can be wanting even to the present satisfaction of this faithful, peaceful, happy man ? how sweet must be his repose ? how enlivening his confidence ? how cheerful in transacting his worldly affairs ? and how exalted his joys, when he retires to converse in secret with the God he loves, in the fervent prayers and praises of an enflamed heart ? His happiness, thus truly and inexpressibly great, leads us in the

3. And last place, to be watchful and always upon our guard, lest we also fall from our own steadfastness. There is no absurdity so great, no crime so horrible, but it may insinuate itself into an open and unguarded mind ; and since the infidelity of the age is so increasing, and that temptations to apostacy may be expected, it is an indispensable duty on every christian, to put on him *the whole armour of God, that he may be able to withstand in the evil day ; and, having done all, in his power, to stand**. It is his duty to bind fast about him *the breast plate of faith, to have for an helmet the hope of salvation, and to take effectual care, that neither life nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor power, nor any other creatures, be able to separate him from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord* ‡.

* Ephes. 6. 13. 6. 11, 12. † Rom. 8. 38.

DISCOURSE XII. Bently.

Deism considered and refuted.

I Pet. 3. 15.

Be ready always to give an answer to every man, that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you.

AS there is no hope without some antecedent belief, that the thing hoped for, may come to pass, therefore the word *hope*, in the text, comprehends also the whole faith of a christian; so that the apostle's design was to enjoin us, to be never unprepared nor unwilling to answer any doubts or questions concerning the christian faith.

At the time of this epistle, the whole world might be considered under one general division, of *Jews* and *Gentiles*; first, the *Jews*, *to whom the oracles of God were committed* †, and who, from thence, had the information and expectation of a *Messiah*. These being persuaded of his coming, the only controversy between them and *Christians* was, whether *Jesus was he that should come, or must they look for another* ‡? Secondly, the *Gentiles*, who having no means of knowledge, besides natural reason, had no notion of a *Messiah*. When therefore these demanded the reason of a *Christian's* hope, they were first to be acquainted with the promises of God, and the reasons of his sending the *Messiah*; and instructed about the quality, office, and circumstances of his person: and then to prove, that *Jesus answered the description and character of the Messiah, and in whom all the ancient prophecies concerning him were accomplished.*

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† Rom. 3. 2. ‡ Luke. 7. 19.

The apostle, no doubt, thought his advice in the text, for to be *always ready to give a reason of the hope that is in us*, would be of use in all ages of the world. And it hath pleased divine wisdom, never yet to permit christianity to be free from opposers; but perpetually to exercise the industry and zeal of its professors. And perhaps without such adversaries to rouse and quicken them, they might, in tract of time, grow remiss in the duties, and ignorant in the doctrines of religion, and the records of it might have perished by man's negligence. It is *while men sleep*, live in peace and security, and have no enemies to contest with, that the great enemy comes and sows tares among the wheat *. But of all past ages, the present has the greatest reason to appear in defence of religion. We have not only Jews and Gentiles to engage with, but even, in the midst of christianity, the most dangerous designs are formed against it, even by enemies of *its own household* †.

There are a sort of persons among us, baptized into the christian faith, and educated in the profession of it; who openly oppose, blaspheme, and even deny the whole authority of revelation. Indeed they profess to believe the being of God and a providence; to acknowledge a difference between good and evil; and to have expectations of a future state, as their behaviour is in this. Nay, the whole system of christian morals they can willingly embrace, as useful rules of life, discoverable by plain reason, and agreeable to natural religion; but then they can see no occasion, that the eternal son of God, should come from the bosom of his father, to act so mean and calamitous a part, on the stage of this sorry world. What need, say they, of so great a master to read mankind lectures of morals, which they might easily learn without any teacher? and

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* Mat. 13. 25, † Mat. 10. 36.

as to those sublime mysterious doctrines, delivered by him, which they own natural reason could not have discovered ; this, so far from recommending to them the importance of his divine commission, is the very reason, they deny the truth of his message. For whatever favours of divine mystery, and soars above the pitch of human knowledge ; whatever they cannot fathom the cause, designs, and relations of ; such as the notion of the Messiah, his incarnation, mediation, satisfaction ; all these they reject and explode, as incomprehensible to pure reason, which is the only principle and measure of their belief.

So that these men act the part of gentiles, and the whole of their religion is no more than what heathens attained to ; the modern deism, being the same with old philosophical paganism, only aggravated with the additional and more heinous crime of apostacy from the faith. Nay, sometimes they persecute Jews, and urge their objections against the christian religion, tho' they no more believe the truth of those objections, than what they object against : like *Celsus* and *Julian*, who collected arguments against the christians from the different sects of philosophy, tho' one argument was inconsistent with another ; and produced objections from the old testament, which they did not believe, against the new one, because they were engaged to oppose it.

I shall therefore endeavour to refute these modern adversaries, under their double shape and character ; 1st. as meer deists, or pagans, renouncing all revelation, and the very notion of the Messiah. 2ly. as acting like Jews, who expect a promised Messiah, the Saviour of the world, yet reject the person of *Jesus*, and wait for another : And,

i. Let us consider them as deists and disciples of meer natural reason. We profess ourselves as much

much concerned as they are, for the use and authority of reason in controversies of faith. We consider right reason as the native lamp of the soul, placed there by our creator, to conduct our judgments and actions, in the course of our lives. True reason, like its divine author, deceives no man, nor can be deceived. Even revelation itself ascribes its own fundamental authority to the test and testimony of reason. Sound reason is the touch-stone to distinguish what is pure and genuine, from what is adulterated; revelation truly divine, from imposture and enthusiasm; so that the christian religion, so far from declining or fearing the strictest trials of reason, every where appeals to it; is defended and supported by it, and cannot without it, continue *pure and undefiled*. 'Tis by the benefit of reason, thro' the providence and spirit of God, that we are this day a reformed orthodox church; that when we departed from the errors of popery, we knew where to stop. Whatsoever therefore is inconsistent with natural reason, can never be justly imposed as an article of faith. That the same body is in many places at once, that plain bread is not bread; such things, whatever claim is made to infallibility, we have greater authority to reject, as being contrary to common sense, and our natural faculties, as subverting all faith, and all the principles of civil life.

We do not then contend with our adversaries, about the dignity and authority of reason; but only differ about the exercise and extent of it. The deists stop, and set bounds to their faith, where reason, their only guide, does not lead the way farther. But we think reason may receive from revelation, new discoveries and prospects of things, the reality of which we are convinced of, tho' we cannot travel those regions, nor penetrate all those truths it reveals. For there is a wide difference be-

tween what is contrary to reason, and what is above it. Thus in created nature, there are many beings we cannot doubt of, the manner of which we are unable to comprehend. The human soul is vitally united to the body, by a mutual commerce of action and passion; this we and our adversaries feel, know, and they will not deny; let them tell us, what is the chain, cement, or invisible tie of that union, whereby matter and an incorporeal mind, can so sympathise by a mutual league of motion and sensation? no, this they will not pretend to, having no conceptions of it. Such an union they are sure of, from the operations and effects, but the cause is too secret to be discovered by the eye of reason. If then they can confess their ignorance of the modes of such beings existence, without doubting of things themselves; have not we much more reason to be humble and modest about the essence of God, the reason of his counsels, and the ways of his actions? certainly under these circumstances we may with reason believe things above and beyond reason.

For example; if we have good reason to believe such a book is the revelation of God, and find in it propositions expressed in plain words, without ambiguity, we say, there is sufficient reason to assent to these propositions, as divine doctrines and infallible truths, tho' we cannot comprehend nor demonstrate the reasons and manner of them. Nor is this an easy credulity; for we do not say, any thing incomprehensible to reason, is alone a proper object of belief, but only as it is supported by some other known and comprehensive truth. Thus if *Abraham* had been told by some ordinary man, that in his and *Sarah's* old age, he should have a son, this promise alone could not have demanded his assent, because the thing, in the way of nature, was impossible. But since almighty God, with whom all

all things are possible, was the author of that promise, he believed the veracity and omnipotence of God without hesitation, and so obtained the glory to be *father of the faithful*. On the same grounds the blessed virgin believed the salutation of the angel, tho' the message seemed impossible to reason. So that reason warrants us to proceed and advance by faith, even beyond the sphere of reason. Thus we believe even the most abstruse mysteries of the christian religion ; of which mysteries perhaps we can assign no reasons, but for our belief we can a good one ; because they are plainly taught in the word of God, which can neither err nor deceive ; and therefore, tho' we should decline and despair to give any account of the reasons and methods of God's counsel in the sending of his son, and only appeal to scripture, yet the deists ought to be satisfied with that proof, since the doctrine is expressly taught in the oracles of God.

But what if even natural light shall discover to us some faint, but certain views of that mysterious instance of divine wisdom and goodness ; and afford us a rational account, why the son of God should condescend to be our mediator and redeemer ? will not this satisfy ? To give some reason then of this wonderful mystery, we must take a view of nature from the first creation and origin of human race.

God made man upright, without any defect in his composition ; without any original perverseness of soul, or false bias of will, judgment, or inclination. He made him an intelligent being, to know God and himself ; to understand and feel present happiness, and to secure it by consideration and contrivance. He endued him with liberty of will, not to act of necessity like the brutes, but with consciousness and voluntary choice. He implanted in him diverse appetites and affections, as useful instruments of his happiness, if fitly employed ; but

none naturally vicious or culpable, or then only so when applied to wrong objects. For not one of the simple affections of the soul, no, not concupiscence, hatred, anger, or revenge are in themselves sinful. Thus for example, envy, tho' a very bad thing, is yet an evil of our own product, and not of God's creating. For the chief parts of it are hatred and grief, very useful and lawful affections; but become evil when we entertain hatred and grief at the good that besals others, which is what we call envy.

God therefore having thus so created man pure and perfect, might justly require him to preserve this original rectitude; that in all his desires, designs, and actions, he should constantly adhere to the dictates of reason and nature; and that nothing less than compleat obedience should recommend him to God's favour; God might, I say, expect this, because it was both reasonable and possible for man to perform it; *reasonable*, because every part of the law of nature promises the true interest and felicity of mankind in the performance: It was also *possible* for man to do this; for as we have prov'd all his natural faculties are right and good, and that the law was accommodated to them, there appears therefore, no reason why he might not observe it. For certainly a just God cannot be so unreasonable a master, as to enjoin what is impossible; *to expect to reap where he hath not sown, to require bricks without allowing straw.*

But then, tho' there was no such original, natural disability in man, yet there arose a moral one; an accidental incapacity supervening to his nature; I mean, that no person except the man *Christ Jesus*, should be wholly pure and free from sin. For by the fall of our first parents, all their posterity are infected, and the leaven is diffused and propagated thro' all generations. Both *Jews* and *Gentiles*
are

are all under sin ; all have sinned; and come short of the glory of God*. For by the deeds of the law (the law of nature and that of Moses) no flesh can be justified in his sight. It is evident then from the principles of reason, besides those of scripture, that upon the deists scheme, on the terms of natural religion, no salvation can be obtained, no life and immortality can be expected : for that being the free gift of God, he may offer it, on what terms he pleases ; and may require nothing less than entire obedience, than unspotted innocence, and consummate virtue. Thus far then even reason holds the lamp to revelation ; that some means of reconciliation between God and man, the judge and offender, must be contrived ; some satisfaction to justice, and a new covenant ; or else the whole bulk of mankind are for ever unhappy. And surely to retrieve a perishing world, was a concern of greater importance, than the creating it, and more worthy the care of heaven ; I say, the care of heaven. For, alas ! on earth what expedient could man find ? could *dust and ashes* presume to speak unto the Lord ? dare any of the sons of Adam to be an advocate for the rest ? himself one of the criminals, and in want of another advocate ? and what friend knew we at the court of heaven, of such high power and favour with God, as to offer his intercession ? or so exceeding kind, as to pay our satisfaction ? Here we own to the deists, that reason was at a stand, nature herself languished between hope and despair, and the whole creation groaned and travailled in pain together † ; when behold ! (what revelation hath assured us of) the eternal son of God, the brightness of the paternal glory, and the express image of his substance ‡, even he, vouchsafed to be our patron and mediator ; to take our nature on him, and dwell among

* Rom. 3. 9, 19, 23. † Rom. 8. 22. ‡ Heb. 23.

among men ; to fulfil that law of righteousness, in which we were deficient ; to bear our guilt, and offer his most precious blood, as an expiation for our offences, as a seal of a new and better covenant than the law of nature ; a covenant of more gracious terms, such as repentance and remission of sins. So that if we truly believe in him, and sincerely endeavour to observe his commands, our imperfect righteousness, thro' the merits of his sufferings, shall be accepted and rewarded, as if we had entirely kept the whole law.

Let me then ask even our adversaries, what flaws or fallacies are in all this. For if reason itself discovers the necessity of some way of reconciliation between God and man ; if man, the party concerned, ought to know the particular way that God did approve and accept of ; if meer reason could not find this out, but revelation alone must inform us ; and if such revelation be actually made, attested and promulgated to the world, bearing all the marks of true revelation, containing nothing unworthy of itself, or of the wisdom and goodness of its author ; why should not we believe and acquiesce in it ? so that whoever seriously considers this, must confess, that the œconomy of man's salvation, as represented in holy scripture, is every way agreeable to that divine character.

But if God, say our adversaries, designed such an universal benefit for mankind, why did he not express it equally to every age and nation, without restraining it to those times and countries alone, that can hear of Jesus, and believe in him ? and what must become of those remote nations, that never had the least tidings of Judea and Jerusalem ? must all those myriads of souls perish, thro' invincible ignorance, for want of impossible faith ? For how could they believe in him, of whom they had not heard ?

heard *? if God be no respecter of persons, is he God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles †?

To these objections of the deists, I hope we are both able and ready to give a reply. As to the imagined partiality of God in preferring one country before another, to be the land of Christ's nativity, this is meer cavil. For supposing the Messiah to assume human nature, he must of necessity be born in some particular country; and therefore this ridiculous objection may equally be urged against all whatsoever. But it appears from the event, that the circumstances of the Jewish nation were of all others the most suitable to the design of the Messiah. For since it was necessary that prophecies should foretell his coming, and that his pedigree and extraction should be accurately deduced, from a series of ancestors; that men by proper marks, might know, this was He; what more fit to these purposes, than the state of the Jews, that peculiar people, who were secluded and distinguished one tribe from another, and from the rest of mankind, by the very frame of their policy? so that the genealogies were less confused, the histories and prophecies more faithfully recorded, and the accomplishment of all more certain, than in any other nation upon earth.

We do acknowledge it to be true, that faith in Christ Jesus is the only way to salvation since the preaching of the gospel. But we do not determine the case of those who never heard of the Lord of life; because in this, God and scripture are silent. However, this we are sure, that God will not condemn them for invincible ignorance‡. For there is no respect of persons with God; but as many as have sinned without law, shall perish without law. That is, the Gentile world shall not be judged and condemned for the breach of the law of Moses, which

* Rom. 10. 14. † Rom. 3. 29. ‡ Rom. 2. 11. 12.

which was never given them, but for sins against the law of nature, and the light of conscience; and by parity of reason, as many as sin without the gospel, shall perish without the gospel; not because they believed not in Jesus, whom they had no notice of; but they will be tried and sentenced for sins against natural reason, for things within their power and capacity; *because when they knew God, they glorified him not as God; but held the truth in unrighteousness, so that they are without excuse**. But then it must be remembered, that even the virtuous heathens can be saved, only by the merits and mediation of Jesus their saviour. For without his satisfaction, there is no remission of sins, nor acceptance of repentance; *since by the deeds of the law, no flesh can be justified, in the sight of God †.* They are saved, if at all, by the sole benefit of Christ, tho' they could not know their benefactor; they *may be purified by the blood of the lamb, manifested in latter times, but pre-ordained, before the foundation of the world ‡.* I proceed to consider,

2. What is urged by deists, under the character of Jews. Now say they it is evident from the prophets, that the Messiah is to be a temporal prince, to sit on the throne of *David*, and to make *Jerusalem* the seat of an universal empire. But the character of Jesus, is as different from the description, as a stable from a palace. In answer to this, we may admit, that the Messiah, when ever manifested to the world, must appear in the manner the Jewish prophets describe him. But then, we say, that if the expressions of the prophets was in this case only, to need a figurative expression, the exception might then appear fair and plausible. But it cannot be denied, that on many other occasions, besides what concerns the Messiah, their discourse

* Rom. 1. 18, 20, 21. † Rom. 3. 20. ‡ 1 Pet. 1. 20.

discourse (after the genius of the eastern nations) is full of metaphor and allegory. This is an easy and natural account, besides other reasons the holy spirit might have, why the kingdom of the Meffiah, tho' spiritual and not of this world, is so often represented by the glories of secular empire.

We may suppose, *when the spirit of God came upon the prophets*, and breathed new warmth and vigor into them; and that the whole scene of Christ's heavenly kingdom was displayed to their views, so as to ravish their hearts with joy, and their imaginations with such glorious ideas; that then their stile would be strong and lofty, full of allusions to all that is great and magnificent in the kingdoms of this world. But then in the other passages of the same prophets, as if on purpose to hint to us the true meaning of the former, the Meffiah is plainly described, without poetical colours, to be a *person of low condition*; *to have no form or comeliness in him*; *a man acquainted with sorrows, and numbered amongst transgressors*; and by other characters so clear and express, that some Jewish Rabbies, to elude so strong a conviction, have maintained that two Meffiahs were foretold by the prophets; the one a triumphant monarch, the other unfortunate and afflicted. But what will not perverse minds surmise, rather than submit to an unwelcome truth.

It is evident then, that the kingdom of Christ, so magnified in the prophetic stile, is a spiritual kingdom; tho' it must be owned the Jewish nation mistook the meaning of those passages. But is it any matter of surprize that they obstinately adhered to the literal sense, which promises a temporal kingdom, with worldly honors and pleasures? An interpretation this, specious and agreeable to their proud hopes and carnal apprehensions, which in Jesus were miserably defeated and disappointed. But this very dispensation, so far from being an objection,

jection, is itself a convincing proof, that he was the true Messiah. For 'tis certain in fact, that the whole nation was persuaded, the Messiah was then coming; 'tis also certain that Jesus the son of *Mary* professed himself the Messiah. Let us now argue upon human reasons, and the common principles of action. If he was not the true Messiah, we can only consider him as a *Jew* of mean quality and education. And then there are but two ways possible, to account, why he should pretend to be the Messiah: Either ambition tempted him to act that imposture; or it was natural enthusiasm. But both these suppositions were fully confuted by every word and action of his life. For whether he was moved by ambition or enthusiasm, he would certainly have acted the part of the Messiah, in a character agreeable to the popular expectations, and received notions of those times. Now the whole nation expected the Messiah to be a great general, to rescue them from the *Roman* power, and to restore the kingdom to *Israel*. So that upon either of these motives, he would have blown the trumpet to rebellion, and attempted their deliverance. Ambition would have animated him to this, as the only way to his hopes and wishes. Or, had enthusiasm inspired him, would he not have promised, to fight the battles of the *Lord*; to execute vengeance upon the heathen; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron. But not so the blessed Jesus. For when the multitude would have made him king, he withdrew himself even by a miracle to avoid it. He did not summon to arms, but to repentance and newness of life. His kingdom was not of this earthly *Jerusalem*, but of that which is to come. He was indeed, truly their deliverer; not from the *Roman* yoke, but the more slavish one of the law, from the bondage to sin and death. Was this the air and language of ambition? The mien and

and spirit of enthusiasm? or rather, that for one of his low condition to profess himself the Messiah in so surprizing a manner, is an invincible testimony, that he was really the Christ, that *his doctrine was from God, and not of men.* I shall draw only one inference, and that is,

The necessity of believing, that Jesus is the Christ. "Nothing indeed can supersede the obligation of the moral law, which is of eternal duration;" And therefore too much cannot well be said, of the excellency and use of the precepts of natural religion; nor can the necessity of their observance, be too often and too warmly inculcated, considered in themselves, exclusive of other duties. Christianity has established morality, on the firmest basis; and our modern advocates for the moral system, in opposition, or derogation from, the divine, must, if consistent with their pretences, retain a great veneration and esteem, at least, for the gospel, which has given the only perfect scheme of moral laws, enforced by far greater sanctions, than the reason or authority of men could devise. And yet the preachers of the gospel ought with great boldness to insist, that there are other duties in religion, of equal necessity and obligation with the moral; such is the belief of a revelation, and a crucified saviour. This is as much a duty, and command of almighty God, as any precept in the decalogue, and as necessary for a well grounded peace and quiet of mind, as morality is for the good order and government of the world. As *without holiness no man shall see, so without faith, it is impossible to please the Lord.* The promises of forgiveness here, and eternal life hereafter, are matters of divine revelation only; and this confined to those alone, who believe the truths, and obey the precepts of it. *He that believeth not the son, shall not see life, but*

but the wrath of God abideth on him. To magnify then, the duties of morality so high, as to supersede, or invalidate, the necessity of a divine faith, is to undermine the strongest foundation on which it stands; on the other hand to carry the efficacy of a barren faith so far, as to derogate from our obligation to good works, is to make the holy scriptures to contradict themselves, and to hinder our pursuit after that holiness, which they most strongly enforce. The son of God, on whom we depend for an eternal inheritance, has declared both necessary; and equally so, with regard to such as come to the knowledge of the truth; he having assured us, that the *unbeliever*, and the *wicked steward*, shall have their portion together, where *shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth*. Let us then hold fast the profession of our faith, without wavering; Let us steadfastly adhere to the salutary revealed doctrine, of a crucified saviour, in whom alone we can hope for sanctification and redemption; as well knowing, that other true foundations for peace and happiness, can no man lay, than what *Jesus Christ* hath done.

D I S.

DISCOURSE XIV. Clark.

The doctrines of religion reasonable to be believed,

Mat. 12. 39, 40.

An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

God, who is the supreme governor of the universe, displays his infinite wisdom and goodness, in creating a variety of rational creatures in different circumstances, and expecting from them a proportionable use of the talents committed to them, according to their different degrees of light and knowledge, and of their respective capacities and abilities. From angels, to whom he has given knowledge and power, far superior to those of men, he expects an *angelical* obedience. From men, to whom he has dispensed various talents and degrees of knowledge, without injury to any one, he expects a suitable return, in proportion to what is given them; not over-ruling their actions by the force and power of an irresistible light, but trying their obedience by their sincere endeavours to seek after knowledge, and to guide themselves by that degree of light, which God has afforded them.

In the state of nature, God discovered himself to men, by the arguments of reason, by the works of

of creation and providence ; having never left himself wholly without witness, the invisible things of God from the creation of the world being clearly seen and understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead. Rom. 1. 20. If then mankind, forsaking this universal light, fall into idolatries the most absurd and unreasonable, and consequently into all kinds of vicious and corrupt practices, they are evidently (as St. Paul declares) without excuse ; and there is no injustice with God, if there be no other sign given to such evil and adulterous generations of men, but the signs of nature, reason and conscience, and the perpetual universal works of God.

Under the Jewish state, God manifested himself to that people, by the law of Moses, the preaching of the prophets, and the accomplishment of that dispensation, in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. Under the gospel, God has made himself known to men by the revelation of his son, confirmed by signs, wonders and miracles of the Holy Ghost, by the completion of prophecies, in a series of events from the beginning of the world. If under this greater and clearer light of revelation, men still continue impenitent ; not bringing forth the fruits of righteousness, nor living worthy of their holy vocation, as becometh the gospel of Christ ; the wrath of God is more severely revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of such men ; and there shall be no further sign given to such an evil and adulterous generation, but the sign of the Son of man coming with the clouds of heaven, in flame of fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel.

When our Saviour first preached his gospel to the Jews, he proved to them his divine commission, and the truth of his doctrines, from the prophecies of the old testament, the law, and the prophets, and also
by

by the mighty works which he performed, as certain evidences of his being the promised Messiah. But his doctrines being of great purity and holiness, requiring reformation of manners and amendment of life ; they were therefore extremely disagreeable to the Pharisees and chief men among the Jews, who were of a haughty and tyrannical spirit, covetous and ambitious, and infinitely zealous for all external forms and ceremonials of religion. For this reason, they hated the spirit of meekness and humility, of goodness and equity, of love and universal charity, which our Saviour taught ; and therefore sought all occasions, to revile both his doctrine and person. But the miracles our Saviour worked, were hard to withstand, for the people could not easily be persuaded, that God would give a deceiver power to perform as mighty works, as those by which the law of *Moses* was at first established. Therefore when the Pharisees could not deny the miracles our Saviour did, they pretended the power which worked them, was of Satan. They said, *he doth not cast out devils but by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils*, v. 24. and when he taught without any miracle, then say they, *master, we would see a sign from thee*. v. 38. If he spake to them with so much reason and goodness, as never *man spake*, still a miracle was wanted to confirm his doctrine. And yet if he confirmed what he taught by undeniable miracles, then the power which worked them was of Satan. But against wilful perverseness there is no remedy ; for this reason, when the Pharisees required our Saviour to shew them a sign, he answered in the words of the text ; *an evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas ; for as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the son of man be three days and three nights in the*

the heart of the earth. By way of reproof for this perverseness of theirs, and as a standing declaration of God's having done all that was fit for him to do ; the divine wisdom refers such persons to the settled and universal evidence of revelation, namely, the miraculous fulfilling of the ancient prophecies, concerning the promised Messiah, meaning his resurrection ; *the son of man shall be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.*

If it be asked how could our Lord *be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth*, when it appears, that he was buried the first day in the evening, and rose again the third day in the morning ; the answer is, that the Jews in their language, as we frequently do in ours, mean by the word *day*, the space of twenty-four hours. What is begun on the first day, and finished on the third, may in vulgar speech, be said to be three days in doing. And the reason of our Saviour's continuing in the sepulchre such a *certain time* before his resurrection, was for the fulfilling of the prophecies concerning him, as also to shew that he was really dead ; but not to continue there so long as to *see corruption*.

The text being thus explained, I shall from thence shew, 1st. that the doctrine of religion is most reasonable to be believed, and sufficiently proved by the standing and universal signs, or marks of truth. 2d. That wicked men are apt continually to tempt God without reason, by requiring more and greater signs. 3d. That there are just and good reasons, why God should not gratify the unreasonable expectations of prejudiced and corrupt minds.

1st. The doctrine of religion is most reasonable to be believed, and is sufficiently proved, by the universal signs or marks of truth. Religion is in its nature a trial or probation of mens hearts, and is therefore inconsistent with all compulsive motives.

God

God puts men in a state of trial, that they may by virtuous actions, obtain an habitual love of virtue; and by a rational search after truth, and patiently persevering in the practice of right, may be purified and tried, *Dan. 12. 10.* God could, if he had pleased, *even out of the stones of the street, raise up children unto Abraham;* or force and compel the most obdurate sinner to obey his commandments. But this would not be to deal with men as rational agents; nor could such an obedience be acceptable to him. Was God by his almighty power to over-rule and prevent all moral evil, or the disobedience of men, which some fancy would tend most to his glory, this would have the contrary effect, and deprive him of the glory of all his moral attributes; for as all religion or virtue, consists in the love of truth, in the free choice and practice of what is right, and in being constantly influenced by rational and moral motives; so God by these things tries and proves mens obedience, and by various methods exercises their faith, patience and virtue. God by enduing men originally with reason and understanding, with a natural knowledge of good and evil, and the difference between virtue and vice; also by the witness God gives of himself, in the works of nature, and of his all-wise providence, by which visible effects, the power and government of the invisible God are clearly and constantly seen; by all these things, God perpetually calls men to religion, and offers them an universal light, in all places, and at all times. And had men no other discovery of the will of God than this, their departing from the natural law of everlasting righteousness would justly denominate them *an evil and adulterous generation of men.* But besides this voice of nature in the visible works of God, in the mind and conscience of every person, the divine providence has in compassion to the ignorant, and for

for a testimony against the perverse and corrupt, raised up eminent preachers of righteousness, in almost every age of the world, to excite and call men to the practice of their duty ; such as *Enoch* before, *Noah* at the time of the flood, *Job* and the *Patriarchs* after it. And to the nation of the *Jews*, he gave a standing revelation of his will ; inviting them to repentance by the prophets, and at last by his son *Jesus Christ*, their promised and long expected *Messiah* ; manifesting his infinite wisdom, *at sundry times and in diverse manners* of revelation, as he had before done, in the various distribution of men's rational faculties, capacities, and abilities ; intending finally to judge all his servants, according to what every one in particular *has*, and not according to what he *has not* ; and in each dispensation giving such degrees of evidence to the truth, for a proper trial of good and well disposed minds, neither credulous beyond reason, nor prejudiced against reason, thereby to receive and obey the truth. Thus to the *Jews*, in our Saviour's time, the proper and sufficient evidence of our Lord's being the promised *Messiah*, to all who impartially searched the scriptures, was the fulfilling the prophecies concerning him ; in particular that most miraculous one, of his resurrection from the dead ; a *Sign* that could only be resisted by a corrupt and adulterous generation, by such perverse and incorrigible sinners as are described in the text. Which brings me to shew, 2d. That wicked men are apt continually to tempt God without reason, by requiring more and greater signs ; *an evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign*. Wicked men who dare not openly fight against God, in order to give some ease to their minds, will take great pains to impose on themselves, with some slight objections, either against the being of God, or against the evidences of his laws and commands. St. Paul says,

says, the Jews, require a sign, and the gentiles seek after wisdom, *1 Cor. i. 22.* The gentile world valued themselves on their logick and philosophy; and therefore the corrupt part of them, could always reject any religious truth, contrary to the received maxims of their schools. The Jews valued themselves on the miraculous things God had done for their fathers; and therefore the corrupt part of them, could always reject any religious truth, by requiring more and greater miracles, in confirmation of it. Their behaviour in the wilderness is a remarkable instance of this; and which the psalmist describes in a most elegant and affectionate manner, *Psal. 78. 13, 14, &c.* " Marvellous things did he in the sight of our fathers, in the land of Egypt. He divided the sea, and let them go thro'; he made the waters to stand on a heap. In the day-time also he led them with a cloud, and all the night thro' with a light of fire. He clave the hard rocks in the wilderness, and gave them drink thereof, as it had been out of the great depth. He brought waters out of the stony rocks, so that it gushed out like the rivers. He commanded the clouds above, and opened the doors of heaven. He rained down manna also upon them for to eat, and gave them food from heaven. He rained flesh upon them as thick as dust, and feathered fowls like as the sand of the sea. He let it fall among their tents, even round about their habitation. He led them forth like sheep, and carried them in the wilderness like a flock. He brought them out safely that they should not fear, and overwhelmed their enemies with the sea."

These signs any unprejudiced person would judge sufficient, to convince the most obstinate and perverse, even the most evil and adulterous generation. But so familiar were these marvels become to them,

as no more to bring them to true amendment and reformation of manners, than the works of nature, (which are the constant miraculous operations of the almighty power of the God of nature) have upon us. For we read in the same psalm, v. 18. that
“ for all this they sinned more against him, and
“ provoked the most highest in the wilderness;
“ they tempted God in their hearts, and required
“ meat for their lust. They spake against God,
“ saying, shall God prepare a table in the wilder-
“ ness? He smote the stony rock indeed, that the
“ water gushed out, that the streams flowed withal;
“ but can he give bread also, or provide flesh for
“ his people.” (Like the Pharisees in the text,
who acknowledged our Lord had healed many
diseased persons, and yet wanted him to shew them
also a sign from heaven.) “ But for all this they sinned
“ yet more, and believed not his wondrous works;
“ they kept not the covenant of God, and would
“ not walk in his laws; but forgat what he had
“ done, and all the wonderful works he had shew-
“ ed them. They turned back and tempted God,
“ and moved the holy one of *Israel.*” A more lively
description of the perverseness of incorrigible
sinners, cannot be given, than what we may read
in this psalm.

And in our Saviour's time, the same spirit of perverseness, called in scripture an *evil heart of unbelief*, which appeared so remarkably in the Jews in the wilderness, still continued in the corrupt part of that nation; so as to render ineffectual all the methods of divine wisdom, to bring them to repentance. John the baptist *came unto them neither eating bread nor drinking wine;* Luke 7. 33. he appeared in an austere mortified way, *and they said, he hath a devil,* that is, they charged him with being mad. On the other hand, *the son of man is come eating and drinking,* v. 34, that is, conversing

ing more freely and familiarly, and they said, behold a gluttonous man, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. When the men of Nazareth heard of the mighty works he had done at Capernaum, they said unto him, whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy own country, Luke 4. 23. But when he did wonders in his own country, they bid him depart hence, and go into Judea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest, John 7. 3. When our Lord miraculously healed many diseased persons, then the Pharisees wanted a sign from heaven; and when there came to him a voice from heaven, John 12. 28. yet they believed not on him. When the chief priests and elders saw our Saviour crucified, they said, Mat. 27. 42. he saved others, himself he cannot save; if he be the king of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. But when he afterwards rose from the dead, to the terror of their own soldiers, set to watch him; then they gave them money to report, that his disciples had come by night, and stolen him away, ch. 28. 13. So that of tempting God, and requiring more and greater signs, to elude the arguments and motives of religion, there is no end. All this proceeds from the same manner of tempting providence, which is represented to us in the history of our Saviour's temptation. If it be the will of God, say they, that men should believe and act in any particular manner, why does he not compel them so to do? why does he not give them signs from heaven, or turn their hearts as he pleases? for who has resisted his will? The answer is plain; that God does not absolutely will such and such things to be done, but his will is, that men should chuse to do them upon reasonable motives; in which alone consists the essence of virtue and all religion. God does not by irresistible motives compel men to obey him,

because that would then be no act of obedience in them. But he tries their obedience by persuasions and motives that are suited to the nature of rational free agents ; of these, some love the knowledge of truth, and are always ready to do what is right ; these our Saviour compares to *good ground*. Others *love darkness rather than light*, and whose hearts are so hardened, that the arguments of reason make no impression on them. To these, the exquisite works of nature prove not the being of God ; the revelation of the Gospel discovers not to them his will : and should God vouchsafe them other calls to repentance, they would prove equally ineffectual ; neither would they be persuaded, even tho' one rose from the dead.

Lastly, I am to shew, that there are just and good reasons, why God should not gratify the unreasonable expectation of prejudiced and corrupt minds. *There shall no sign be given to this generation, but the sign of the prophet Jonas.* The reasonableness of this proceeding is evident from what has been said. Eternal life is the gift of God, and his just and reasonable design is to bestow this free gift upon those, who by an habitual practice of virtue, shall have their minds qualified for that happy state. The practice of virtue consists in the willing choice of what is good, and avoiding what is evil ; and the time for this, is the present state of trial. God could if he had pleased have prevented all moral evil, by giving no *free will* to his creatures. But then the whole creation would have been only a great machine, in which tho' God's omnipotent power would have appeared, yet he would have been no king, judge, nor moral governor ; nor could have displayed any of those excellent perfections, of justice, mercy, and the like, in which God's glory principally consists. For these can only be where subjects are capable of obeying and dis-

disobeying. The proper trial of which obedience^c is that freedom of will, which in different circumstances, determining according to what is good or evil, renders the agent morally good or evil. God therefore places men in variety of circumstances in this state of trial; and the justice, wisdom, and goodness of his government, consists in finally judging them all with equity, according to their respective degrees of light and knowledge. The first root or foundation of virtue, is a sincere desire to know God's will, and impartially to search after the truth; and God, in order to try this disposition, has given such notices of himself to mankind, by nature and revelation, that if any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine; and if he desires not to practise it, even the knowledge of it shall be hid from him. *To him that hath, shall be given, and from him that hath not, shall be taken away even that which he hath.* By the light of nature, God manifested himself to men in the works of creation, visibly enough to those who will *seek the Lord*; but yet so, as that vicious ill disposed men, *seeing*, may still not *see*; and *bearing*, may still not *bear*; but may go on to ascribe the most perfect works of infinite wisdom, to fate, chance, or nothing. By revelation, God has declared his mercy towards sinners; signifying to them, that as a great king may, consistent with the laws of his kingdom, by the interposition of his beloved son, pardon as many of his rebellious subjects, as by his son's invitation and persuasion, will return to their duty; so will God, the supreme governor of the universe, also accept all those, whom the spirit of Christ, either under the state of nature, by such preachers of righteousness, as were *Noah* and the *Patriarchs*; or under the law, by *Moses* and the *Prophets*; or under the gospel, by our Lord and his apostles, shall by any of these means bring to

repentance. And the evidences of this revelation, like the evidences of God in the works of creation, are fitted to satisfy an unprejudiced mind, and yet are not such as cannot be resisted. When the Pharisees asked of our Saviour *a sign from heaven*, Mat. 16. 1. his answer was, Luke 12. 56. *ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky, and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time?* referring to the prophecies, which more plainly pointed out the time of his coming, than ever the face of the sky fore-signified the weather. These prophecies he fulfilled, in his life, and by his death, by many miraculous actions and sufferings. And when he was raised up the third day, *God shewed him openly; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, and commanded to preach unto the people*, Acts 10. 41. God doing here, not every thing that unreasonable men might expect, but what he himself thought proper to be done.

God has given us faculties, to enable us to search after, and find out truth; and he expects we should attend with an unprejudiced and impartial mind, as rational creatures should do, to that light he affords us. *Why, even of your selves, judge ye not what is right*, says our Saviour, Luke 12. 57. They who thus judge, and with a mind desirous to do the will of God, receive and embrace the doctrine of truth; not carelessly, credulously, and implicitly; but with reason, examination, and attention; with such impartial consideration and inquiry, as enable men by observation and care, to find what others are blind to, and to be ready always to give a reason of the hope that is in them. These are the persons whom the scriptures commends for having the virtue of faith; in opposition to the vice of infidelity, and the folly of credulity. For we walk by faith, and not by sight, 2 Cor. 5. 7. by a rational persuasion, not by necessity. This is what makes faith and hope to be

be virtues. For hope that is seen, is not hope ; for what a man seeth why doth he yet hope for ? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it, Rom. 8. 25. The God of nature, in whom we live, move, and have our being, who is not far from every one of us, is not visible to mortal eyes ; but the light of nature affords reasonable men very great arguments to believe and trust in him, and this is a commendable, and well grounded faith. For *faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen* ; and the patience of Moses, was, that he indured, as seeing him who is invisible, Heb. 11. 27. The evidences of natural reason, and of the most demonstrable truths, do not force themselves upon all men ; but to the impartial and attentive, the unprejudiced and considerate, they appear in their full strength ; and 'tis an act of virtue therefore, to be guided by them. For the same reason, in matters of revelation also, *blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed, John 20. 29* ; that is, not they who are credulous and believe without reason ; but they who, like the Boreans, are convinced of the truth, by searching into the grounds of it ; *The trial of whose faith, will be found unto praise and honour and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ : whom having not seen, ye love ; in whom, tho' now ye see him not, yet believing ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, 1 Pet. 1. 7.* This is the character the scripture gives us of the virtue of faith, and the commendation of those who have it. On the contrary, they who by prejudices and vicious inclinations are prevented from searching after the truth, and instead of examining and attending to what is right, rather seek for cavils to evade the evidence and conviction of it ; these are the persons whom the scripture most justly condemns for their infidelity, as being *an evil and adulterous generation.* Persons thus resist-

ing the truth, our Lord after the first and second admonition, rejected ; and refused to give them any further signs ; dealing with them, as God did with the *Jews* of old : *my people would not hear my voice, and Israel would not obey me ; so I gave them up unto their own hearts lusts, and let them follow their own imaginations*, Psal. 81. 12. And to men of the same temper in future ages, the scripture threatens, that God in just anger, shall send them *strong delusions, that they may believe a lye*, 2 Thes. 2. 11.

Perhaps some will say, if we had been in the days of our fore fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in these things. But to every impenitent sinner, in the present as well as in former times, the experience of the world, the reason of things, the judgment of conscience, and the scripture of truth says, *thou art the man*. For all these things are *examples unto us, and are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come*. God calls us to repentance, by the continual witness which he gives of himself in the works of creation, in the reason and nature of things, in the essential differences of good and evil, in the voice of conscience, in the dispensation of providence, in his mercies and judgments, in the completion of prophecies, in the works and preaching of *Christ* and his apostles, in the promises and threatenings of the gospel. And if all these things move not men, there shall no other sign be given to us, till *the coming of the son of man to judgment*.

DISCOURSE XV. Barrow:

The cause and fatal tendency of infidelity.

Heb. 3. 12.

Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you, an evil heart of unbelief.

AS infidelity is the chief cause of all the sin and evil that is in the world, it is very necessary to dissuade all persons from it; and which I shall endeavour to do, from these words. Infidelity the apostle assures us, is a sin proceeding from the heart, the heinousness whereof will more fully appear, by considering it's nature, causes, effects, and consequences. The nature of infidelity consists in an affected ignorance of the noblest and most useful truths; a bad use of reason; disregard to or defiance of God's providence; abuse of his grace; mistaken opinions and want of affection towards him.

God out of his exceeding goodness and kindness to mankind hath proposed a doctrine, that is of itself *worthy of all acception*, containing most excellent truths, to instruct our mind and direct our practice towards the attainment of salvation and eternal felicity. He hath made gracious overtures of mercy highly necessary for us, in this our state of weakness, sin, and guilt; also given us large encouragements and even promises of rewarding our obedience. But so beneficial a doctrine infidelity rejects, thereby defeating the wisdom of God, and his earnest desires to have us happy, and despising his goodness and patience. To confirm the truth of this doctrine, God hath afforded many clear attestations

tations of it's proceeding from himself* ; such as ancient prophecies and predictions, audible voices and visible appearances from heaven, innumerable miraculous works, with a concurring providence to maintain and propagate it against many powerful oppositions and great disadvantages ; but infidelity notwithstanding, flights and disregards all these testimonies. God hath furnished us with many plain arguments, sufficient to convince our minds, and engage our belief ; such as the dictates of natural conscience, the testimony of experience, the records of history, the consent of the best and wisest men, all which conspire to prove the truth, and recommend the usefulness of the Christian doctrine ; but infidelity will not regard nor submit to reason. God, by the publication of his gospel, and the exhortation of his ministers, doth offer us means and motives, inducing us to believe ; but infidelity frustrates all such methods ; saying to God, *depart from us ! for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.* God by his grace attracts our wills to comply with his will, and excites our affections to relish this truth ; but infidelity actually resists his spirit, extinguishes the heavenly light, stifles all the motions and suggestions of divine grace within us ! In short, infidelity questions God's veracity, and denies what he asserts ; it contests and disputes his wisdom, and will not approve of what God commands ; it distrusts his power and faithfulness, and will not confide in what God promiseth ; so that infidelity in it's nature is full of iniquity and impiety towards God and his truth.

As to the causes of infidelity, they are many. It sometimes proceeds from negligence and carelessness. Men are often possessed with a spirit of slumber, or so amused with secular entertainments, as not to mind the concerns of their souls, or regard

* 1 Pet. 1. 10. Acts 3. 8. Luke 24. 44. Heb. 2. 4.

gard the means which God mercifully offers for their conversion. Thus the persons who were invited to the wedding feast, being careless or not regarding it, *went their ways, one to the field, another to his trade.* But how shall such escape, who disregard so great salvation? Of such as these wisdom complains; *I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded**. No man indeed, the greatest part of men are on this account infidels; who being chiefly taken up in pursuit of worldly affairs, in amassing up wealth, driving on projects of ambition, enjoying sensual pleasures, gratifying their fancy and humour with vain curiosities, they have no time to regard instruction, and so are ignorant of the christian doctrine.

Another source of infidelity is sloth, which will not let men undergo the fatigue of seriously attending to the principles of christianity, so as to examine the grounds, and weigh the reasons of our belief; from hence it is, that if any doctrine does not at first happen to please their fancy, they presently reject it before they know, or will take pains to understand it. Thus when the *Athenians* heard St. Paul preaching the grand points of faith, *some mocked, others said, we will hear thee again of this matter* †. Indeed a solid faith, like any science, requires a clear understanding and firm persuasion, a sedulous and persevering study; for as a man can never be learned, who will not be studious, so one that is slothful can never prove a good believer. Infidelity also often proceeds from a bad judgment, corrupted with prejudices and partial inclinations. Men are apt to entertain notions favourable to their natural appetites and humours, lusts and present interests; which represent to them, that riches, honor, dignity, pleasure and ease,

* Mat. 22. 25. Heb. 2. 4. Prov. 1. 24. Isai. 66. 4.

† Acts 17. 32.

are things most desirable and necessary to our happiness, and that it is a deplorable case to be in want of them. And as all men are strongly biased towards these things, it becomes difficult to remove such prejudices, or check such inclinations; nor is it easy to entertain a doctrine which represents such things to be indifferent, nay, *that* sometimes obliges us to reject them, and always requires us to be moderate in the pursuit and enjoyment of them. Infidelity will therefore naturally spring up in a mind, whose judgment is thus corrupted.

Another cause of infidelity is perverseness of will, which hinders men from entertaining notions disagreeable to their own fond and obstinate humour. The will of some men is an impregnable bulwark against all attempts of conviction. They are so invincibly stubborn, as to withstand the clearest evidence, the strongest reason. If they like not what is said, and that it thwarts their humor, yet they will not admit it, nor be persuaded, tho' it be clearly proved to them, and that they are really convinced. Such was the temper of the *Jews*, a *stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears**; tho' they heard discourses the most rational and engaging, tho' they saw the most admirable works that were ever performed, yet they would not embrace our saviour's doctrine. The mean appearance of the person, who taught it, the spirituality of it's design, the moral goodness of it's precepts, and such like considerations, not agreeing with their fancies and desires. They expected a *Messiah* arrayed with gay appearances, of external grandeur and splendor, whose chief business should be to make their nation prosperous and glorious. This is that hardness of heart, which is so often represented as an obstruction of belief. This hindered *Pharoah*, notwithstanding all those mighty works performed before him †, from harkening to

* *Acts 7. 51.* † *Exod. 7. 4, 22, 8, 15, 19, 9, 12.*

to God's word, and regarding the judgments threatened to his disobedience. *I will not*, (said he) *let Israel go* *. His will was his reason, which no persuasion, no judgment could subdue. This was the cause of that monstrous infidelity in the *Israelites*, which frustrated all the methods God used to persuade and convert them; who notwithstanding would not hear but hardened their necks, like those of their fathers, who did not believe in the Lord their God †. The disbelief of the gospel on the apostles preaching is also ascribed to obduracy, or hardness of heart, tho' St. Paul went into the synagogue and spake boldly for three months ‡, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God; yet diverse were hardened and believed not §. Therefore are we required to hear God's voice, and not to harden our hearts **. To exhort one another daily, lest any of us be hardened, thro' the deceitfulness of sin ††.

Of a similar nature is that perverseness of heart, that delicacy and niceness of humour, which will not let men entertain and embrace any thing that is seemingly hard or harsh to them. If they cannot presently comprehend all that is said, if they can frame any cavil or little exception against it, if every scruple is not answered, every thing distasteful to their sense removed, they are offended, and their faith fails. Thus when our Lord discoursed somewhat mysteriously, and represented himself in the figure of heavenly bread, (typified by the manna of old) given for the world, to sustain men in life; many of his disciples hearing this, said, this is a hard saying, who can bear it? and from that time, many of them walked no more with him ‡‡. Therefore says our Saviour, blessed is he, who shall not be offended

* Exod. 5. 2. † 2. Kings 17. 14. ‡ Act 19. 9.
|| Psal. 95. 7, 8. ** Heb. 3. 8. †† Heb. 3. 13.
‡‡ John 6. 49, 50, 51, 60, 66.

fended in me *. In regard to this weakness, the Apostles were very prudent in their instructions, proposing to some, only the most easy points of doctrine; to feed such with milk, and not meat, they not being able to bear it †. Nay, the apostles themselves were in their minority offended at our Lord's discourses about his sufferings, notavouring the things of God ‡.

Pride is another grand cause of infidelity, and which prevents the admission of christian truth. Before a man can rightly believe, he must cast down every towering imagination and conceit, *that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God* ||. Pride fills a man with an affected vanity of being wiser than others, which inclines him to reject such common truths, as are received and believed by the generality of mankind. A proud man is ever unwilling to renounce his prejudices, and correct his errors, because he thinks it implies a confession of weakness, ignorance, and folly, and impairs that credit which he had for wisdom. There is *more hope of a fool*, than him that is *wise in his own conceit* **. He that is puffed up with his own wisdom and knowledge will not submit to embrace notions, which he cannot easily penetrate and comprehend. He will not suffer his understanding to be puzzled by sublime mysteries of faith, nor readily assent to what is too high or difficult for his improvements in knowledge. He will urge *how can these things be* ††, since I can see no reason why they should be true? For several articles required to be believed, says the infidel, are not intelligible? Thus will he treat the dictates of faith, not considering the weakness of his own reason. Hence *not many wise men according to the flesh*; (that is persons who were conceited of their own wisdom, relying upon their natural

* Mat. 11. 6. † 1 Cor. 3. 1, 2, ‡ Mat. 16. 23, 26, 31, || 2 Cor. 10. 5; ** Prov. 26. 12. †† John 3. 9.

natural faculties and means of knowledge) not many *scribes or disputers of this world*, did embrace the christian truth; to such as these that doctrine appeared absurd and foolish.

Indeed, the prime and fundamental notions of christianity do really tend to debase pride and vanity, to exclude all glorying in ourselves; ascribing all to the praise and glory of God, to his pure mercy, bounty, and grace. The gospel represents all men to be heinous sinners, of no worth and merit, lapsed into a wretched miserable state, destitute of ability to help or relieve themselves. But proud hearts cannot digest such notions, they will not own their infirmities and defects, vileness and unworthiness, distresses and miseries; nor can they endure to hear of being obliged to favour and mercy for their happiness.

Christianity doth also but little esteem those things, which men are apt much to prize and value. It makes small estimation of riches, honor, power, secular wisdom, or any human excellency. In spiritual concerns, it not only levels the rich and poor, the prince and peasant, the philosopher and idiot; but prefers the meanest simplest person, endued with true piety, before the highest and richest, who is devoid thereof. This a proud man cannot bear. It is insupportable to his spirit, to be divested of his imaginary greatness, to be thrown down from his perch of eminency, to become inferior to those whom he so much despised. The practice of christianity doth also sometimes expose men to the scorn and censure of prophane men; who out of envy or revenge are apt to deride and reproach all that conscientiously practice their duty, as superstitious, morose, or sullen persons. So that he who will be good, must resolve to bear such usage; but it goes against the grain of a proud heart to be contemned. Christianity doth also indispensably

fably require duties directly opposite to pride ; it places humility among its chief virtues, as the foundation of piety ; it enjoins us to think meanly of ourselves, and not to regard the praise of men ; it exacts from us a sense of our vileness, remorse and contritions for our sins, and humbly to confess them with self-condemnation and abhorrence ; it commands us patiently to bear injuries and affronts, without intending or even wishing any revenge ; it obliges us contentedly to suffer disgraces, crosses, and afflictions ; to *prefer others before ourselves**, to be submissive and condescending to the meanest persons. But to all these duties a proud mind bath an irreconcilable antipathy. A man swollen with haughty conceits of himself, cannot stoop so low.

Another spring of infidelity is want of good resolution and courage. Timorous men dare not believe such doctrines, as will engage them upon difficult, laborious, and dangerous enterprizes ; to suffer hardships, pain, want and disgrace ; to encounter such mighty enemies as every faithful man is obliged continually to wage war with. They have not the heart to look the world in the face, when it frowns, or threatens them with persecution and disgrace ; but *when affliction ariseth for the word, they are presently scandalized*†. It is said in the gospel, that *no man spake freely of our Lord, for fear of the Jews*‡. Nor have they courage to adventure a combat with their own flesh, and those lusts which *war against their soul*||, to correct their temper, restrain their appetites, bridle their passions, repel temptations, resist the devil. They are afraid to attempt duties so harsh and painful. To part with their ease, riches, pleasure, credit, and accommodations of life, are such terrible things, as to deter a faint and fearful heart, from complying with the christian doctrine. In short, infide-

* Phil. 2. 3. † Mat. 13. 21. ‡ John 7. 13. || Jam. 4. 1.

lity proceeds from a mind corrupted by any brutish lust, irregular passion, bad inclination or habit; and every such wicked disposition in us, will obstruct the admission or entertainment of that doctrine, which prohibits and condemns it under severe punishments. Hence men of corrupt minds, and reprobate concerning the faith, and men of corrupt minds, destitute of truth*, are by St. Paul joined together, as agreeing in practice. To them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure, but even their mind and conscience is defiled †. Such pollution is not only consequent to, and connected with, but antecedent to infidelity; so blinding the mind as not to see the truth, and perverting the will, as not to close with it.

Faith and a good conscience are inseparable. The end and purport of the evangelical doctrine, or gospel of Christ, is charity, out of a pure heart, and a good conscience, and a faith unfeigned ‡. And the apostle commands us, to hold the mystery of faith in a pure conscience; which some putting away, have made shipwreck of faith ||. A man void of good conscience will not embrace christianity, and he who lays aside conscience, will soon make shipwreck of faith, by apostazing from it. Resolute indulgence to any one lust is apt to produce this effect. For instance; if a man be covetous, he can hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven, or submit to that divine law, which forbids us to lay up treasures on earth, but commands us to be liberal in communicating our goods, and to give them to the poor; which ascribes happiness to the poor, and denounces woe to the rich, who have their consolation here. Preach such a doctrine to a covetous person, and he will go away sorrowful **. The love of money, saith

St

* 2 Tim. 3. 8. 1 Tim. 6. 5. † Tit. 1. 15. ‡ 1 Tim. 1. 5. || 1 Tim. 3. 9. 1 Tim. 1. 19. ** Mat. 19. 23. Mat. 6. 19. 1 Tim. 6. 18. Luke 6. 20, 24.

*St. Paul, is the root of all evil, which while some have coveted after, they have erred from the faith ** ; that is, wandered or apostatized from it. If a man be ambitious, he will not approve that doctrine, which prohibits us to affect, seek after, or admire temporal glory ; and commands us in all our actions to regard God's honour and glory as our principal aim ; which greatly disparageth all worldly glory, as vain, and transitory, but requires us to prefer others before ourselves †† ; which promiseth the best rewards to humility, but threatens abasement to those who exalt themselves ¶¶|. Such doctrines ambitious minds cannot admit. The Jews therefore could not believe, because they received glory from one another ; nor profess the faith, because they loved the glory or praise of men, rather than the glory of God ‡‡.*

* If a man be envious, he will not like that doctrine, which enjoins him to regard his neighbour's welfare, as much as his own ; to delight in the prosperity of others ; not only to seek his own happiness, but that of another also ; to rejoice with them that do rejoice, and mourn with them that mourn. He therefore who is possess'd with an envious spirit or evil eye, will regard this doctrine as the Jews did, who being full of envy and emulation, rejected the gospel, because the poor Gentiles were thereby admitted to favour and mercy †. If a man be revengeful, he will not like that law which commands us to love our enemies ‡, to bless them that curse us, to do good to them that hate us, to pray for them that despitefully use us ; which forbids us to render evil for evil, or railing for railing ; which requires

** 1 Tim. 6. 10. Gal. 5. 26. John 12. 43.
 5. 44. †† Phil. 2. 3. ¶¶ Mat. 23. 12. ‡‡ John.
 5. 44. 12. 43. * 1 Cor. 12. 26. 10. 24. Phil.
 2. 4. Rom. 12. 15. † Acts 5. 17. 13. 45. 17.
 5. ‡ Mat. 5. 44. 1 Thes. 5. 15. Ephes. 4. 32.
 Col. 3. 8. 1 Pet. 2. 1.

requires us to bear patiently, and freely forgive all injuries, to avoid all wrath, animosity and malice, as inconsistent with our salvation. But how can a heart full of rancour and boiling with anger, embrace such a doctrine as this? If a man be intemperate he will hate that religion whose precepts command us to be *temperate in all things, || to bring under our bodies, to avoid all excess, to possess our vessels in sanctification and honour, to mortify our members on earth, to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul*; to such precepts a luxurious, lustful heart will never conform. In short, whatever corrupt affection a man is possessed with, it will work in him a dislike to that doctrine which prescribes and requires universal holiness, purity, innocence, virtue and goodness, as an indispensable condition of salvation; which does not allow one sin to be indulged, but threatens wrath and vengeance on all wilful impiety, iniquity, and impurity, indifferently and without reserve. A soul that is impure, dissolute, or passionate, cannot embrace rules so holy and strict as the gospel recommends. *Every one that doeth evil hateth the light +, because it detects his own vileness and folly, his sad state and woeful condition; because it checks him in pursuing his wicked designs, and damps the enjoyment of his unlawful pleasures, and robs him of the satisfaction he proposed in a vicious course of life.*

As every man is unwilling to entertain a bad opinion of himself, he will therefore be apt to reject that doctrine, which being supposed true, condemns him for a fool and miserable wretch. No one loves to be galled or tormented with a sense of guilt, to be terrified with the dread of punishment,

or

|| 2 Tim. 4. 5. 1 Cor. 9. 25, 27. Ephes. 15. 18. 1 Thes. 4. 4. Col. 3. 5. 2 Pet. 2. 11. Eph. 2. 11. 4. 22. Rom. 6. 6. 1 Thes. 4. 3. Eph. 5. 6. Col. 3. 6. Rom. 1. 18. 2. 8: + John 3. 20.

or to live under the awe and apprehension of eminent danger ; gladly therefore would he shun that doctrine, which proves him to be a grievous sinner, which denounces terror, woe, and misery to him ; he cannot relish that truth, which is so much his enemy, as to tell him news so sad and disagreeable ; for who would be content to see omnipotency engaged against him ? to think himself standing on the brink of eternal misery, to hear a roaring lion ready to devour him, to suppose that certain which is so dreadful. Hence it is, that *the carnal mind is enmity to God*, that bad men *rebel against the light*, that *foolish men and sinners shall not attain to wisdom* ; for *she is far from pride, and lyars cannot remember her**. Hence a man who resolves to be wicked, must in his own defence, for the sake of peace and quietness, be an infidel ; faith being a troublesome companion to a bad conscience. He who determines not to forsake his lusts, will reject those opinions which cross them ; thinking it best the gospel should be false, he will fancy it to be really so. The custom of finning will also by degrees so abate the deformity of sin, and reconcile it to our minds, as that we cannot easily believe it to be so horrid and base as the gospel represents it. The practice of vice will also weaken our judgment, and stupify our faculties ; so that we cannot clearly apprehend or judge of spiritual concerns ; it also quencheth God's spirit, and drives away his grace, which would produce and preserve faith in us.

Besides what has been said, we may easily perceive from what spirit infidelity proceeds, by the principles which its great masters and patrons espouse, to support and countenance it ; all which favour much of baseness and ill-nature. They libel and revile mankind as destitute of true goodness, and dispense with that charity which is due to their neighbour ;

* Rom. 3. 7. Job 24. 13. Eccles. 15. 7.

neighbour ; they allow nothing in man to be immaterial or immortal, so turn him into a beast, or make him the produce of fate and chance ; they ascribe all actions and events to necessity or external impulse, thereby destroying all justice and virtue ; so that no man may be responsible for what he doth, no action neither commendable nor culpable. They explode all natural difference between good and evil ; ridiculing benignity, mercy, pity, and gratitude, as childish and weak dispositions ; they extol power, but disparage goodness as a mean thing ; thereby preferring a devil to an angel ; they regard conscience as a bugbear to frighten children and fools, and allow men to compass their designs by violence, fraud, slander, or any injurious methods ; hereby destroying all the securities of government, conversation and commerce ; so that nothing hinders a man from rebelling against his prince, betraying his country, abusing his friend, or cheating any man, if he can but do it with advantage and safety to himself. Such are the principles of our infidels, not only avowed in common discourse, but taught and maintained in their writings ; all which appear to be the effect of a deplorable blindness, and desperate corruption of mind, the certain consequences of extinguishing natural light, and extirpating all good-nature.

Lastly, the wickedness of infidelity will appear by considering its effects and consequences ; which briefly are a spawn of all vices and villainies, a deluge of all evils and outrages on earth. For remove faith and conscience, and no virtue can remain ; all sobriety of mind, all justice in dealing, all security in conversation are then banished away, and there is nothing to encourage men to any good, or restrain them from any evil ; when once we discard all hopes of reward from God, all fears of his punishment, no principle or rule of practice is left, but

but only brutish sensuality, self-love, and private interest, without any check or restraint ; and this will incline men to be cruel, base, and treacherous to one another. Every man will then be a god to himself, and an enemy to each other ; so that the world must become a *chaos*, a perfect hell, full of iniquity and impunity, of malice and envy, of misery and torment. Infidelity will deprive men of all hope from providence, of all comfort and support in affliction, of all satisfaction in conscience, and of all the good which faith produceth. The consideration of which innumerable evils hath engaged statesmen in all ages and countries to support some kind of faith, as necessary to maintain public order, trade, and peace among men. So that from what has been said, an infidel, if he hath but common sense, should for his own interest, safety and pleasure, be persuaded to encourage faith in others, and to wish all men to be endued with it as well as himself. Reason obligeth all men to detest atheistical supplacers of faith, as desperate enemies to mankind, to all government, and destructive of common society, especially as the christian religion doth, above all others, most conduce to the benefit of public society ; it enjoining all virtues useful to preserve it in a quiet flourishing state, and requiring loyalty under pain of damnation. The sinfulness and unreasonableness of infidelity is therefore sufficiently manifest, from the evil nature, bad causes, and effects thereof.

It is infidelity that makes men covetous, uncharitable, discontented, timorous, and impatient. Because men believe not providence, therefore they so greedily scrape and hoard up money ; because they do not believe any reward for charity, they will not give to the poor ; because they do not hope for any assistance from God, therefore they are discontented and impatient. Infidelity was the cause

cause of the devil's apostacy ; it banished man from Paradice, by trusting to the devil, and distrusting God's word ; it, by disregarding the threatenings of God, brought the deluge on the world ; and kept the *Israelites* from entering into *Canaan* †. In short, infidelity is the root of all sin ; for did men sincerely believe the promises made to obedience, and the threats to disobedience, they would scarcely be so unreasonable, as to forfeit the one, or incur the other ; did they believe that the omnipotent, all-wise, most just, and severe God did command and require what he does, they surely would not dare to offend so perfect and infinite a being.

God has declared that he will judge every man according to his works ; to them who by patient continuance in well doing, endure the heat and burthen of the day, he will give the reward of their labour. Even from them whom he has called later in the day, after a long course of sin and wickedness, he will not withhold his mercy. Indeed, great is the work they have to do, and short the time to perform it in ; but if with double diligence they labour to retrieve the hours lost, they shall be saved, tho' it be by great difficulty, and like a brand plucked out of the fire. But to them, who presumptuously go on in sin, despising the calls and neglecting the means of grace, there remains nothing but tribulation, and anguish, and a terrible looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, from the justice of God. *Consider this ye that forget God, lest he pluck you away, and there be none to deliver,* Psal. 50. 22.

To conclude ; let us all consider, and in a serious application of what has been offered, remember, and be convinced, that religion is no trifling concern, to be performed in a careless, superficial manner ; an employment designed only for some idle

† Heb. 3. 19. 4. 6.

idle hours ; but it is the great business for which we came into the world ; a rule that extends itself to every part of our conduct, public and private ; and in many instances commands us to oppose the whole torrent of our passions, and restrain the most importunate appetites of our nature. As the extent of the service therefore, obliges our constant attention, so the difficulties of it require all our strength and might, the utmost application of all our powers. Even the most perfect among us, who have their passions in the best discipline, who have subdued the hardest struggles with their corruptions, and are arrived to a state of pleasure and delight, in the paths of obedience, are yet obliged to be constantly on their guard ; having many temptations to resist, many conflicts with those enemies which war against the soul, many failings and lapses to lament and recover, so that they have enough to do, to preserve a conscience void of offence, and keep themselves in a due preparation to meet their judge, *and give account of their stewardship.* But how much more has the habitual sinner to perform, if he intends to escape the damnation to come ? what labours must he encounter ? what agonies and distractions of soul endure ? what difficulties overcome, before he can cleanse himself from the pollutions of sin, and be fit to inhabit that holy place, where no unclean thing can enter ?

Let us then all live in a constant and serious expectation of that day, when we must appear before the judge of heaven and earth. Let the righteous persevere with patience, and go on abounding in the work of the Lord, supported with this consolation, that their labour shall not be in vain. And let the sinner tremble to think thro' what difficulties he must escape, and therefore immediately strive with all his heart and soul, to correct the evil of his ways, and bring forth fruits meet for repentance ; lest the

day of judgment

night overtake him, when none can work, and he be for ever excluded the kingdom of heaven.

How, alas ! will the sinner appear in that awful day, when even the failings and miscarriages of the righteous, shall not be concealed, tho' the mercy of God be magnified in their pardon ? With what confusion will he hear all his unrepented sins, proclaimed before men and angels, and even the mild and merciful Jesus pronounce that dreadful irreversable sentence, *go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels* ||.

DISCOURSE XVI. Littleton.

Mysteries no real objection to the truth of Christianity.

Deut. 29. 29.

The secret things belong unto God, the Lord our God, but the things which are revealed, belong unto us, and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.

Among the various artifices by which the adversaries of our faith have attempted to destroy the credit of revealed religion, that of representing it as an enemy to our reason, has been the most successful. A charge, which could it be supported with as much truth and justice, as with confidence it is asserted, would have great weight, not only upon the ignorant and unwary, but also on the wisest and most considerate part of mankind. For

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what-



whatever is plainly contradictory to our reason, can never be the object of our faith ; and any religion that would impose such doctrines on its professors, must be a false, corrupt religion. Thus far our adversaries and we agree ; but then it is our duty, in a matter of so much consequence to our salvation, to be careful not to reject a doctrine, as being contradictory to our reason, till we have fully tried and examined it, and that not only with such a deliberate caution, as the importance of the thing deserves, but also with all that diffidence and humility, which becomes creatures of such limited capacities. There are many things perfectly inconceiveable, which, on strict enquiry, will be found not to be against, but above reason. This in general we are willing enough to acknowledge, tho' we are too apt to forget, or deny it in particular instances. Who of us will not readily confess, that our knowledge is finite & and yet when we come to use it, we behave as if we thought it infinite. Known unto us are all God's counsels, from the foundation of the world ; we arraign, or acquit his providence just as suits best with our own schemes of government ; and the secret things which belong to him, we can explain in so clear a manner, as if they were no secrets at all. We think it a reflection on our understandings, not to be able to solve all difficulties, and give some account for every thing. Solutions, subtleties, and distinctions, are invented to palliate our ignorance ; and rather than renounce one favourite error, we plunge ourselves into others, that are innumerable.

To check and restrain this exorbitant curiosity, this pride of human reason, was the design of *Moses* in my text *, who having instructed his followers in the great duties of their religion, *and set life and death before them*, proceeds to inform them ; that if there



there was any thing in the revelation then delivered to them, which they did not perfectly comprehend ; or if any doubt should afterwards arise, which they could not resolve, that they should be contented with the light he had given them, there being some things, which they must not expect to understand. *The secret things belong unto the Lord our God.* And that they might the more readily acquiesce in that share of knowledge which he had imparted to them, he next acquaints them with the use of it. *But those things which are revealed, belong unto us, and to our children for ever, that we may do all the works of this law.* And since scepticism and infidelity are at least as common in our days, as in any former time, we having a set of unbelieving disputants, who will admit nothing without the evidence of demonstration, unless it be an error of their own inventing ; in regard also that the great mysteries of our religion were never more indecently treated, nor the moral part of it less practised, than at present ; for these reasons I will endeavour to shew,

First, that the difficulty, or impossibility of conceiving the sacred mysteries of our faith, is no reasonable objection to the truth of them.

Secondly, that in matters so vastly beyond the reach of our capacities, it is not only a needless, but dangerous presumption, to be too curious and inquisitive concerning them.

Thirdly, that there are other matters of much greater consequence, to employ our meditations, and which it is our duty to study and examine. And,

Fourthly, that this and all other knowledge will be vain and insignificant, unless it has an influence on our lives and manners. The sole end and design of God's revealing his will to us, being *that we may do all the words of his law.*

First then, the difficulty, or impossibility of conceiving the sacred mysteries of our faith, is no rea-

sonable objection to the truth of them. This I urge on the supposition, that the grounds of our religion are sure, certain, and sufficient; that it has been confirmed by signs and wonders, and attested by all the outward circumstances of credibility, that can be expected in a revelation from God; that its practical doctrines are unexceptionable, and worthy of their divine original; and that there is no other reason for disputing its truth, than because of the mysteries, which it requires us to believe. And even in this case, however it may mortify our pride, to submit to doctrines we do not fully comprehend; yet if they are not absolutely contradictory to our reason, the truth of them we ought not to dispute. For after all our boasted excellencies, what is there that we do fully comprehend? not a thing in the whole compass of nature, were we to pursue our enquiries to the utmost, but it would puzzle the wisest of us, to explain. The most ordinary, common objects of our senses, were we to search into their secret qualities, would appear as mysterious as any article of our faith. The whole creation is full of wonders, were it not that they grow common and familiar to us, before we are able to consider them as we ought. We never doubt of their existence, because we see and perceive them to exist. But had we not the demonstration of our senses, reason would never help us to the discovery. Ought we then to be surprized, that our reason should fail us, where our senses cannot possibly exert itself?

If the material world is too glorious, or mysterious for our comprehension, can we think it more easy to understand the world of spirits? to expect it, discovers a very wild and wanton curiosity; and should God be pleased to gratify us therein, yet new discoveries would arise, and all the additional knowledge

knowledge we had gained, would only tend to make us more sceptical and inquisitive.

The truth is, were there not some difficulties in our religion, some things *hard to be understood*, there would be no such thing as faith ; that must cease, or be swallowed up in knowledge. When an article of faith is proposed to us, our only concern is, whether it be the proper object of our reason ; if not, however true in itself, to *us* it must be mysterious. And to reject any doctrine on that account, is to establish our own shallow, weak judgments, as the standard of all truth and possibility ; 'tis to claim a knowledge no less than infinite ; to prescribe bounds to omnipotence itself ; and is as if we should say to God, *thus far shalt thou come, and no farther*. Better would it become us, to *cast down* our vain *imaginings*, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ ; for however necessary it may be, in matters within the compass of our reason, to guard against artifice and imposture, by insisting on her supremacy ; yet about subjects, which are manifestly too great for her comprehension, we ought to acquiesce in the revelation which God has made of any doctrine, and to take his word for the truth of it. For instance, should any one attempt to persuade me, that a piece of bread or wafer, is, in a strict and literal sense, the whole and perfect body of our Lord *Jesus Christ* ; and not only so, but that another piece of bread, is at the same time, the same whole and perfect body, and this when my reason tells me by the information of all my senses, that it is no more than common bread ; can I ever believe such monstrous contradictions, let the arguments produced to prove them be what they will ? Again, should a man endeavour to persuade me, that God is not just and good, or to deny any of his

moral attributes and perfections, I should still find the same difficulty to believe him: Because, tho' God is not the object of my senses, yet the same arguments and deductions of reason, that prove there is a God, also assure me, he is possessed of all perfections. But should he proceed to inform me further, that in the unity of his godhead, there are three persons; here my reason would be utterly at a stand. I am sensible that in corporeal beings, such as man, an union of this kind would be impossible; but not knowing the nature of immaterial substances, and their manner of existence, it possibly may be so; and therefore, if I have reason to believe that God has revealed it, then it ought to be an article of my faith; and the same may be said as to any other mysterious truth. The difficulty is not in the nature of the thing, but arises from the defect of our own ideas; and as it is a sign of meer stupidity to believe any thing which contradicts our reason; so is it an instance of great pride and obstinacy, to dispute the truth of what is above it. And therefore,

Secondly, in matters so vastly beyond the reach of our capacities, it is not only a needless, but dangerous presumption to be too curious and inquisitive concerning them. That it is needless, appears from the difficulty of understanding them; and that it is dangerous, the many heresies and errors which have sprung up in the christian church, may abundantly convince us. There is a sort of half-bred smatterers in philosophy, who have just sense enough to raise doubts and scruples, but not sufficient to clear them up. Such spare no pains to let others see they will not be imposed on in any thing; and the result is, that with all their wisdom and sagacity, they fare worse than those who pretend to neither. The case is much the same with the half-learned too: If you offer to instruct them, they disdain to be informed; and

and resolve not to be cheated into the belief of whatever they think it a disparagement to take upon trust; they will receive nothing that is not level to their capacities; they have read enough to suspect every thing; and rather than be induced to believe too much, they will not believe the truth. It is pity, the indiscreet and hasty zeal of some pious, well-meaning persons has attempted to defeat these invincible antagonists, by answering their little cavils and objections; since it is one of the least advantages to the interests of religion, to prove that its adversaries are stupid and absurd. It lies on them to shew, that the doctrines we teach are impossible; till then we may be fairly excused, for not making unnecessary attacks on them. It is incredible what an advantage the enemies of our faith have gained over us, by this humour of encountering all the errors and absurdities, all the mis-begotten monsters and chimeras, that the brains of conceited infidels, by a heated imagination, have produced. How often have these abortive births gained strength by exercise and opposition? How often, by the indiscretion of their opponents, become formidable even to truth itself? But if truth will quit her post, and unnecessarily engage on the confines of error and ignorance, we need not be surprized to see her sometimes suffer in the conflict: Neither party, while they fight in the dark, has more than an equal chance for success; and when one insists on greater evidence than the subject can possibly admit, and the other will not be content, without giving him satisfaction about what neither of them understands; what is this but to fight in the dark? How often have two strenuous antagonists, one of which perhaps set out in the right, so puzzled and perplexed themselves with unmeaning terms, so blinded themselves with the cloud which they have raised between them, that they have at last proved both to be in the wrong? How often

has religion itself been injured thro' the sides of an injudicious advocate? And how often has the refutation of an ancient heresy, given birth to many new ones? The disputes and divisions that almost ever infested the christian world, have been chiefly on subjects of the most mysterious nature; and had their rise from the same common source, the desire of being wise above what is written, and the pride of explaining inexplicable difficulties. How much better had it been, for themselves and the world, who was to receive the benefit of their labours, had they been content to talk sense on subjects they understood, and silently acknowledge, with reverence and admiration, *that secret things belong to the Lord our God!* Especially if it be considered,

Thirdly, that there are other matters of much greater consequence to employ our meditations, and which it is our duty to study and examine; *the things which are revealed, belong to us and to our children for ever**. By the things revealed, is here meant all such particulars as are evident to our reason. For whatever distinctions are sometimes made between the evidence of sense and reason, or of reason and revelation, they are in this case all the same. The senses are but inlets or avenues, by which outward objects gain admission to the understanding; it is reason, or the thinking faculty, which helps us to form our judgment, and that should ultimately determine our assent: When therefore we distinguish between the evidence of sense and reason, we can mean no more than that, in some cases, our reason is assisted by our senses, tho' not in others. In spiritual and abstracted speculations we have only the use of our reason; but in things which are the proper objects of our senses, they supply the mind with intelligence, on which to form her judgment.

But

But in both cases we appeal to reason, and upon her answer we found our faith. Revelation is indeed another help, but then is no more than a help to reason: It discovers to us many secrets of nature, many great designs of providence, many engaging motives to the practice of our duty, which would otherwise have been concealed from us: But revelation itself can have no credit and authority, till it has received the approbation of our reason. For whatever articles of faith are revealed to us, in holy writ, are founded on no surer evidence, than that the scriptures are the word of God; and that they are so, we can only discover by our reason. So that whatever degree of certainty those articles may be supposed to have, it can be no greater than our reason gives. This observation I thought was necessary, because the evidence of faith is sometimes magnified and exalted in opposition to that of reason, and even to what is called the evidence of sense. A notion calculated for the support of popery, which is established in direct contradiction to our senses; but our religion wants no such helps. It is a reproach and disservice to any cause, to call in error and falsehood to its assistance. Truth itself is too apt to suffer from the defect of such impotent opposers. To suppose therefore, that our faith is founded on reason, is so far from invalidating the evidence of faith, that it tends much to strengthen and confirm it: For what greater degree of certainty can any rational creature require, than to be convinced on rational principles? Was it possible for God to require us to believe on any other grounds, our faith would be nothing but error and confusion, and certainty would then cease in the world.

Whatever therefore is so evident to our reason, (either by the information of our senses, or the instruction of God's word) as that we believe and ac-

knowledge it to be true, whether we fully understand the meaning of it, or not, may properly be called a revelation from God. And what a vast field does this afford for contemplation? Who that has such a boundless view before him, need complain that his prospect is not sufficiently enlarged? That mystery, which was hid from ages and generations, and which the angels desired to look into, is now manifested unto us. We know enough to employ our wonder and admiration, enough to excite our joy and delight, enough to make us easy here, and *wise unto salvation* in the world that is to come; and if this will not satisfy us, the same restless curiosity would still disquiet us, had we the powers and capacities of angels. He who can be an infidel or an immoral man, with that degree of certainty which the scripture offers, is not either, because he wants knowledge, but it proceeds from his own inclination: It is not that he cannot, but because he will not believe to any good purpose; which leads me to consider,

Fourthly, That this and all other knowledge will be vain and insignificant, unless it has an influence on our lives and manners; the only use of knowledge, being to guide and conduct us to the land of everlasting rest. This is so very evident in itself, that nothing but the corruption and iniquity of mankind, could render it necessary to be insisted on. Every one knows, that heaven was never proposed as a reward to wisdom and learning, and that none will be condemned to endless torments for any thing but wilful ignorance. It is only the practice of our duty that can make us acceptable to God, however other endowments may make us to be esteemed in the world: But it is the misfortune of our most holy religion, that the pride and ostentation of knowledge, has, in a great measure, rendered it useless. If it does but procure respect and esteem, people are well

well enough satisfied, without expecting any further reward ; and to the shame and reproach of knowledge, it is with some become a proverb, that ignorance is the mother of devotion.

One would indeed think, from the zeal of contending parties, that they had religion very much at heart ; but it too often appears from their managing the debate, that it is in truth the pride of victory, the glory of gaining proselytes to a party, which is really the prevailing motive at the bottom. But let us remember, that all useful knowledge, however it may seem to be an attainment of our own, is indeed *the free gift of God* ; a talent committed to our custody, for the benefit of others, as well as ourselves. We must expect to give a strict account of it ; and, when required from us, it will little avail to say, *Lord, in thy name, have we taught and written ; in thy name have we cast out heretics,* and confuted the enemies of thy faith ; unless it appears at that great tribunal, that we have behaved like those who in earnest believed ; that our conduct was conformable to our knowledge, and that we have approved ourselves Christians, *not in word only, but in deed and in truth.* *Where then is the wise ? Where is the disputer of this world ?* The very least in the kingdom of heaven, is greater than such an one. In a word, let us all pursue knowledge as much as we please, but let it not cause us to forget religion. The desire of knowledge is a natural appetite, and, like all others, is not to be extinguished, but only regulated and conducted by reason. *Wisdom is the principal thing ; Solomon says, therefore get wisdom, and with all thy getting, get understanding.* But let us remember the advice of one greater than Solomon, *let us hunger and thirst after righteousness too.* This is the truest wisdom, and the surest method to obtain whatever other wisdom we can desire. If we indulge this thirst of knowledge, then

will be our time to gratify it, when we enjoy God's presence in heaven ; when all the difficulties that now perplex us will be removed : When our faculties will be more vigorous and active, and instead of that short span of existence, which we call life on earth, we shall have a whole eternity before us, to go on from *strength to strength*, and entertain ourselves with new discoveries for ever.

From what has been said we may observe, that the christian religion obliges us to believe nothing that is not conformable to the dictates of right reason. Its mysteries are indeed above reason, but not contrary to reason. God, in the works of nature, never uses extraordinary means, such as miracles, but only in cases where the ordinary means are insufficient to perform the effect. And as to the articles of our faith, where a point may be deduced from the common principles of natural religion, there we should not insist on a revelation to attest it ; for the chief design of revelation is to discover to us such truths, as human reason could not reach ; and to display such motives to embrace these truths, as are not with equal certainty to be drawn from rational principles. And from hence we may perceive how much those persons are to blame, who set up faith in opposition to reason ; their whole business is to declaim against reason, to magnify its frailty, to direct us in the right way, that so they may persuade us to resign our reason to our faith ; or rather, to whatever they shall please to impose on us ; little considering, that he who vilifies reason, does, in fact, undermine that foundation on which faith is built. For we cannot believe any assertion, or judge it reasonable to be believed, but on the rational evidence it brings with it ; so that faith and reason are not opposite to, but mutually help and assist each other ; and that faith, which is not built on

on a reasonable foundation, is presumption and confidence, and very improperly called faith.

We may from hence also observe, a wide difference between the belief of the doctrine of the trinity in unity, and that of transubstantiation. The common evasion of the papists, when they are pressed with the absurdities naturally attending the doctrine of transubstantiation, is to assert, that we may as easily believe this, as that of the trinity. They confess, that the doctrine of transubstantiation, or the bread and wine being changed into the very body and blood of Christ, cannot be reconciled to reason: But, say they, we must submit our reason to faith, and our senses to revelation; and it is as reasonable for us to believe transubstantiation, as any other mysterious points of religion, in particular, the trinity in unity; not considering the difference between these two. For our assent to these two articles, namely, the trinity in unity, and transubstantiation, is required from different motives; the one being properly the object of sense, the knowledge of the other not attainable, but by divine revelation. And we are not to expect that God should make use of such an extraordinary method to discover those truths to us, that may be easily known by the use of our reason and senses. How ridiculous would it be, to search the bible to prove, that there is a difference between black and white, hard or soft, or to expect a revelation to discover truths of which no one doubts; and no less absurd would it be to enquire, whether that be the real body and blood of Christ, which all our senses assure us to be real bread and wine; and therefore, when any text of scripture seems to contradict the verdict of our senses, we must not take it in a literal sense. But the doctrine of the trinity in unity is beyond our senses or reason; and can only be discovered by revelation. And whatever we find

plainly

plainly to be revealed, must be assented to by us. For to suppose we can comprehend these divine truths by our reason, is as vain and foolish, as to endeavour to span the distance between heaven and earth, or to fathom the sea with a yard?

Let us therefore learn to be candid and charitable, to avoid all hard censuring and contention about these matters; and especially of imposing upon others such articles of faith, as are not expressly revealed in the holy scriptures. 'Tis evident how much we are at a loss, to explain the doctrine of the trinity in unity; and yet there is no point has been controverted with more unchristian zeal, both in the primitive and more modern times. The cause of which seems to be, that pious and learned men, being too fond of their own conjectures, have endeavoured to impose such things on others to believe, as they themselves do not understand, or can give any clear or plain explication of; all which might in a great measure be prevented, by the observation of this plain rule; to hold fast what is clearly revealed in the holy scripture, and mutually to forbear one another, as to such particulars as are obscure and difficult to be understood: For God is not so hard a task-master to us, as we are to one another; he has made the most useful truths the most plain and intelligible; and those which are not so, are less necessary to be believed. And if God has been thus kind to us, why should we be so inexorable to one another.

DISCOURSE XVII. Bp. Tillotson.

Of a Trinity in Unity.

1 Tim. 2. 5.

For there is one God.

THREE are several propositions contained in — this and the following verse ; but I shall at present confine myself to the first, namely, *that there is one God, and but one ; there is none other God but one**. Moses makes the unity of the divine nature, to be the foundation of the *natural law*, as well as of the *Jewish religion* ; *the Lord he is one God, and there is none besides him*†. This the prophet *Isaiah* also perpetually declares in opposition to *polytheism*, and that variety of Gods which prevailed among the *heathens*. *I am the first, and I am the last, and besides me there is no God. Is there any God besides me ? There is no God, I know not any*‡. He whose knowledge is infinite, knows no other God ; and our *blessed Saviour* makes this the fundamental article of all religion, and the knowledge thereof necessary to every man's salvation ; *This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God.*

The unity of the divine nature is a notion wherein the greatest and wisest part of mankind did always agree ; and may therefore reasonably be presumed to be either natural, or to have sprung from some original tradition delivered down from the first parents of mankind ; I mean, that there is one supreme being, the author and cause of all things,

whom

* 1 Cor. 8. 4. † Deut. 4. 35. ‡ Isai. 44. 6. 8.

whom the ancient heathen poets called the father of Gods and men. Aristotle thus defines God; *the eternal and most excellent, or best of all living beings.* And this notion of one supreme being perfectly agrees with that exact harmony which appears in the frame and government of the world, wherein we see all things conspiring to one end, and continuing in one uniform order and course; and this in reason can only be ascribed to one constant and uniform cause, and which, to a considering man, plainly proves, that all things are made and governed by that one powerful principle, that great and wise mind, which we call God. But tho' the generality of mankind had a notion of one supreme God, yet the idolatry of the heathen evidently shews, that afterwards this notion was greatly corrupted, and degenerated into an apprehension of a plurality of Gods. However reason assures us there can be no more than one God, and who being of infinite perfection, is as sufficient as ten thousand deities, could so many exist. But notwithstanding the multitude of deities, which the fond superstition of men had formed to themselves, yet the wiser heathens, such as Socrates, Plato, Tully, and others, preserved a true notion of one supreme God, whom they defined to be *an infinite spirit, pure from all matter, and free from all imperfection.* Tertullian observes, that even when idolatry had much obscured the glory of the sovereign deity, yet the greater part of mankind, in their common forms of speech, did still appropriate the name of God in a more peculiar manner to one; *saying, if God grant, if God please,* and the like. So that there is sufficient reason to believe, that the unity of the divine nature, or the notion of one supreme God, creator and governor of the world, was the primitive and general sentiment of mankind; and that polytheism and idolatry were a corruption and degeneracy from the original notion which men had concerning

cerning God; as the scripture history doth fully declare and testify. But then it should be observed, that whatever may be said of the *heathen idolatry* by way of extenuation, in behalf of some few of the wiser and more devout among them, yet the generality were notoriously guilty, both of believing *more Gods*, and of worshipping *false Gods*: And this must needs be a very great crime, since the scripture assures us how *jealous* God is in this case, and that he will not give his *glory to another, nor his praise to graven images*. We should not so much as use sensible images to remind us of God, lest devout ignorants, seeing the worship paid by wise men towards an *idol*, should terminate their worship to the deity itself, which was certainly the case of great part of the heathen world; and surely those Christians are in no less danger of idolatry, who pay a veneration to *images*, by *kneeling down* and praying before them; or rather they are more inexcusable, because they offend against a much clearer light.

I shall now proceed to shew how agreeable this principle, that there is *but one God*, is to the common reason of mankind, to the clearest and most essential notions we have of God. And this will appear, First, by considering the most essential *perfections* of the divine nature. Secondly, from the inconsistency and impossibility, the great absurdity and inconvenience of supposing more Gods than one.

First, by considering the most essential *perfections* of the divine nature. *Absolute perfection*, which we ascribe to God, necessarily supposes *unity*; because it is essential to the notion of an *absolute perfect* being, that all perfection should meet and be united in such a being: But to imagine more Gods, some perfections in one, some in another, destroys the most essential notion men have of God, that he is a being *absolutely perfect*: For to suppose some perfections in one God, which are not in another, is to

to suppose God wanting in some possible perfection; which is a contradiction to the most natural notion we have of God, that he is a being in whom all perfections center. But if there are more Gods than one, each of whom hath all possible perfections united in him, then all but one would be needless, and consequently this cannot be; since *necessary existence* is *essential* to the *deity*; and therefore, if *only one God* is necessary, there can be no more.

Secondly, from the inconsistency and impossibility, the great absurdity and inconveniency of the contrary; for example, suppose there were *two Gods*, (and if *two* there may be a *million*) either these *two* would be equal and alike in all perfections, or they would not; if equal and alike in all things, then *one* would be needless; and if *one*, why not the *other*? They being supposed to be perfectly alike. And then there would be no necessity for the being of God, and yet all agree that *necessary existence* is *essential* to the notion of God. But if they are unequal, *one* of them inferior to, and less perfect than the *other*, that which is so, could not be God, because he would not have all perfection. So that view it in what light we will, the notion of more Gods than one, is by its own repugnancy destructive of itself.

But before I apply this doctrine of the *unity* of God, I must endeavour to remove one difficulty, concerning the doctrine of the *blessed trinity*, or of *three* real differences, or distinct persons, in one and the same divine nature; for tho' this is not a difficulty peculiar only to the *christian* religion, as hath been inconsiderately thought; (since long before *christianity* appeared, there was an ancient *tradition*, both among *Jews* and *Heathens* concerning *three* real differences or distinctions in the divine nature, nearly resembling the doctrine of the trinity, as I shall presently more fully shew:) Yet it cannot be denied,

denied, but that this difficulty in a more particular manner affects the *Christian* religion; as those who believe a *Trinity* do also believe *there is but one God**. But some will say, how can this possibly consist with the doctrine of *Christians* concerning the *Trinity*; God the *Father*, *Son* and *Holy Ghost*, to each of whom they attribute by authority of scripture, the most incommunicable properties and perfections of the divine nature? and what is this but to affirm *that there are three Gods*? for the clearing of this difficulty, I shall briefly offer these following considerations.

Let it then be well considered, that there is a wide difference between the nice speculations of the schools, beyond what is revealed, concerning the doctrine of the *trinity*, and what the *scripture only* teaches and asserts of this mystery. For it cannot be denied but that the *schoolmen*, who wrought a great part of the *divinity* out of their own brain, as spiders do cobwebs out of their own bowels, have started a thousand subtleties about this *mystery*, such as no *christian* need trouble his head with, much less to believe them. The modesty of *christians* is contented in *divine mysteries*, to know what God hath revealed concerning them, without having the curiosity of *being wise above what is written*. They acknowledge that the doctrine of the *Trinity*, even as it is asserted in scripture, is still a great mystery, and so imperfectly revealed, as in a great measure to be incomprehensible by human reason. And therefore, I dare not to give particular explication of this great *mystery* by the strength of reason, knowing the difficulty and danger, and my own insufficiency to attempt it. To shew the credibility of the thing, from the authority of scripture, without descending to a more particular explication than scripture hath given, will surely be enough;

* 1 Cor. 8. 6.

enough; lest by endeavouring to clear the difficulties already started, new ones should be raised, harder to be removed. Firmly to believe what God hath thought fit to declare in this matter, is necessary for us, tho' we do not perfectly comprehend all he hath revealed concerning it. For in such cases an *implicit faith* is very commendable; I mean to believe whatever we are sufficiently assured God hath revealed, tho' we do not fully understand the meaning of such revelation. Thus every man who believes the *holy scriptures* to be a divine revelation, doth also *implicitly* believe the prophetical books of scripture, and several obscure expressions in those books, tho' he does not particularly understand the meaning of all the predictions and expressions contained in them. And there are many good Christians that do not believe and comprehend the mysteries of faith nicely enough to approve themselves to a scholastical judge of controversies; who yet, if they heartily embrace the doctrines which are clearly revealed in scripture, and live up to the plain precepts of the christian religion, will, I doubt not, be very well approved of, by the great, just, and *infallibly infallible* judge of the world. As to the words *Trinity* and *Person*, tho' the former is not to be found in scripture, nor that the latter is there expressly applied to *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Ghost*, yet these *three* are there spoken of, with as much distinction from one another, as we can speak of *three* several persons; and it will be difficult to find a more convenient word, whereby to express the distinction of the *three*; for which reason I see no just cause to quarrel at these terms, so as we mean thereby no more or less, than what the scripture says in other words.

It deserves further to be considered, that there has been a very ancient *tradition*, concerning *three* real differences or distinctions in the *divine nature*, nearly

nearly resembling the *Christian* doctrine of the *Trinity*. The *Jews* had this notion ; who distinguished the *word of God*, and the *holy spirit* of God, from him who was *absolutely called God*, whom they looked on as the *first principle* of all things.

And among the *Heathen*, *Plato*, who probably had this notion from the *Jews*, made *three distinctions* in the *deity*, by the names of *essential goodness, mind, and spirit*. So that whatever objections this matter may be liable to, neither the *Jews* nor *Plato* have reason to object it to us *Christians*; especially since they pretend no other ground for it, than either their own *reason*, or *ancient tradition?* whereas we *Christians* appeal to a *divine revelation* for what we believe in this matter, and which we believe singly on that account. And it is very remarkable, that the *scriptures* deliver this doctrine of the *Trinity* without the least doubt concerning the unity of the *divine nature*, and constantly assert, that *there is but one God*. In those very texts which mention these *three differences*, the *unity* of the *divine nature* is expressly asserted ; as, *there are three that bear record in heaven, the father, the word, and the spirit; and these three are one*. Nor can a plurality of Gods be inferred from this *mystery*, as the same is delivered in *scripture*, without making the *scripture* grossly to contradict itself ; and if either *Councils, Fathers or Schoolmen*, have so explained this *mystery* as to give any just ground, or plausible colour for such an inference, let the blame fall where it is due, and not be charged on the *holy scriptures*; but rather, *let God be true, and every man a lyar.*

Let it also be considered ; that it is not repugnant to reason, to believe some things which are incomprehensible by our reason, provided we have sufficient ground for the belief of them : Especially as to what concerns God, whose nature is *incomprehensible*

sible, when he hath certainly revealed them. We need not wonder that these differences in the *deity* are incomprehensible, by our finite understandings, when the *divine nature* itself is so; and yet the belief of *that* is the foundation of all religion. There are many things in *nature* which we cannot comprehend how they are or can be; as the certainty of matter how the parts hang so fast together, that they are often very hard to be parted; or how the small *seeds* of things contain the whole form and nature of the things from whence they proceed, and into which they gradually grow; and yet this is common to our sight and knowledge. There are also many things in our *selves*, which we know not how they are done and performed; as the *vital union of soul and body*. Who can imagine by what means a *spirit* is so closely united to a *material body*, as not to be parted without great force and violence offered to nature? The same may be said of our several faculties of *sense* and *imagination*, of *memory* and *reason*, and the *liberty* of our *wills*; and yet we certainly find all these in ourselves, tho' we cannot comprehend or explain the manner in which the several operations of them are performed; much less can we expect to comprehend the infinite nature and perfection of God, who is certainly the greatest mystery of all others, and whose nature and manner of existence are both incomprehensible by human understanding. And the reason of this is evident, because God is infinite, and our knowledge is but finite; and yet no sober man ever thought this a good reason to call the being of God in question. The same may be said of God's certain knowledge of future contingencies, which depend on the uncertain wills of free agents; it being utterly inconceivable, how any understanding can certainly before hand know that which depends on another's *free will*; and yet the *scripture* not only attri-

attributes this foreknowledge to God, but gives us plain instances of God's foretelling such things many ages before it happened, as could not come to pass but by the sins of men, in which God can have no hand, tho' he permits it. Such was that memorable event of the death of *Christ*, who was by *wicked hands crucified and slain*, and which is said to have happened according to the *determinate foreknowledge of God*, foretold by him many hundred years before. Both scripture and natural reason ascribe this power and perfection to the divine nature, and yet it would puzzle the greatest *philosophy*, to determine how any knowledge can infallibly foresee an event, thro' uncertain contingent causes.

Again, what is more inconceiveable than how a thing should be of it self, without any cause of its being ; and yet our reason compels us to acknowledge this ; because we certainly see that something is, which either must have been of itself, without a cause; or else something that we do not see, must have been of itself, and also made all other things? It is by this reasoning we are forced to acknowledge a *deity*, the mind of man being able to find no rest but in the acknowledgment of one *eternal and wise mind*, as the first *principle cause* of all other things ; and this *principle* is what mankind by general consent call *God*. So that God hath laid a sure foundation to acknowledge his being in the reason of our minds. And tho' it is extremely difficult to conceive how any thing can be of itself, yet necessity obliges us to acknowledge it ; and this once granted, our reason, tired by trying other ways, is forced to join with the general apprehension and belief of mankind concerning a *deity*. Thus it appears by several instances, that it is not repugnant to reason, to believe the existence of many things, whereof we cannot give any particular and distinct account ; much less is it contrary to reason to

to believe what we are well assured God hath declared concerning himself, tho' it should be incomprehensible to our reason. This is the present case; We are sufficiently assured the scriptures are a *divine revelation*, and that this *mystery* of the *trinity* is therein declared. And that we cannot comprehend it, is no sufficient reason not to believe it; for if it was, then no man ought to believe there is a God, his nature being certainly incomprehensible. But many arguments from natural reason assure us, there is a God; and that he is *incomprehensible*; and to believe him so, does not lessen our belief of his being. In like manner, *divine revelation* teaches us the truth of this doctrine of the *Trinity*, and if we cannot comprehend it, that is no reason for us to disbelieve it. A man cannot deny what he sees, tho' it be something which he cannot comprehend. It ought then to satisfy us, that we have sufficient evidence of this doctrine's being delivered in scripture, free from contradiction; without pretending to comprehend what is infinite, or to know all the real differences that are consistent with the unity of an infinite being, or to be able fully to explain this *mystery*, by any similitude taken from *finite beings*.

And here I beg leave to consider an objection made by the church of *Rome*, namely, that by the same reason we believe in the doctrine of the *Trinity*, we ought to receive that of *Transubstantiation*. A doctrine the most abominably absurd, of all that ever was invented. But there is by no means equal reason, to receive or reject these two doctrines, of the *Trinity* and *Transubstantiation*.

First, there is not equal reason for the belief of these *two doctrines*, by any evidence and proof from scripture; it being no more evident from thence, that the sacramental bread is substantially changed into *Christ's natural body*, by virtue of those words,

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This is my body ; than that Christ is changed into a vine, or a rock, by virtue of those words which call him a vine or a rock † ; or, that the christian church is substantially changed into the natural body of Christ, because it is expressly said of the church, that it is his body. Besides several of their own writers confess that transubstantiation can neither be directly proved, nor necessarily concluded from scripture ; but this the writers of the christian church did never acknowledge concerning the trinity and the divinity of Christ, but have always appealed to the clear and undeniable testimonies of scripture for the proof of these doctrines. The force then of the objection amounts to this, that if we must believe what God surely says, tho' we cannot comprehend it, then we must by the same reason believe the greatest absurdity, tho' we have no divine revelation concerning it. And if this be their meaning, we cannot grant what they would have, because there is not equal reason to believe two things, for one of which there is good proof, but none for the other.

Secondly, neither is there equal reason for rejecting these two doctrines ; either because they are equally incomprehensible, or equally absurd and contradictory. I have already shewn there is no reason to reject a doctrine because it is incomprehensible ; and I hope it will not be said, that we may as well deny the being of a God, because it is incomprehensible by our reason, as deny transubstantiation, because it evidently contradicts our senses. Nor are these two doctrines equally absurd and contradictory ; so far from it, that the doctrine of the Trinity, as delivered in the scriptures, and herein before explained, hath no absurdity or contradiction, either involved in, or consequent to it ; but the doctrine of transubstantiation is full of both. But sup-

pose there even was some appearance of absurdity and contradiction in the doctrine of the *Trinity*, as delivered in scripture, must we therefore believe a doctrine that is not there revealed, and which is not only absurd, and contradictory to sense and reason, but what at once destroys all manner of certainty? The priests of *Baal* did not half so much deserve to be exposed by the prophet for their superstition and folly, as the priests of the church of *Rome* do, for this senseless, stupid doctrine of theirs, with a *hard name*.

The practical inferences which I shall make from this doctrine of the *unity of the divine nature*, shall be the same that God himself made by *Moses*, *Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self* †. So that according to our Saviour, the whole duty of man, namely, the *love of God*, and of our *neighbour*, is founded in the *unity of the divine nature*.

First, the *love of God*; *The Lord thy God is one Lord*, therefore thou *shalt love him with all thy heart, &c.* this is the *first and great commandment*; comprehending all the duties of the first table; that is we should serve him *only*, and pay no religious worship to any but him; for God being but one, we can rightly give religious worship to none but him: And among all the parts of religious worship, solemn invocation and prayer is peculiarly appropriated to the *deity*; because he is ever present to know our desires and wants, and always able to supply them. We may also infer from the *unity of the divine nature*, that we should not worship God, by any sensible image or representation; because he is a *singular* being, and nothing can be like, or fit to be

† Deut. 6. 4. Mark 12. 29.

be compared to him : *To whom will ye liken me, saith the Lord, and make me equal?** And therefore with no distinction whatever, can it be lawful to give any part of religious worship to any but God ; because him only we believe to be Ged.

Secondly, the love of our neighbour is also founded in the unity of the divine nature, and may be inferred from it. *The Lord thy God is one Lord, therefore thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self. There is one God and father of all; hath not one God created us? Why do we then deal treacherously every man against his brother?* When therefore we see great enmity and hatred amongst men, sad divisions and animosities among christians, we may not only ask St. Paul's question, *is Christ divided?* but also, *is God divided?* Is there not one God, and are not we his offspring ? Are not we all the sons of Adam, who was the son of God ? So that originally all are equal : And this equality, that we are all God's creatures and image, and that the one only God, is the father of us all, is a more real ground of mutual love, peace, and equity, in our dealings with one another, than any of those petty differences and distinctions of strong and weak, rich and poor, wise and foolish, base and honourable, can be to encourage men to any thing of insolence, injustice, and dishonest dealing. Because that wherein we all agree, namely, that we are the creatures and children of God, and have one common father, is essential and constant ; but such things as we differ in, are accidental and mutable, and happen to one another by turns.

* Isai. 46. 5.

DISCOURSE XVIII. Bp. Stillingfleet.

The incarnation of *Christ* agreeable to natural reason.

John 3. 17.

For God sent not his son into the world, to condemn the world, but that the world thro' him might be saved.

THE psalmist, meditating on God's providence to mankind, could not but with astonishment say, *Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou so regardest him!* † Indeed, *what is man!* but a mass of vanity and disorder; weak in his judgments, wilful in his passions, uncertain in his best resolutions, violent in his worst inclinations, and with difficulty brought to understand and pursue his truest interest? What is such a creature as this, that a God infinitely wise and powerful, far above our thoughts and services, should be concerned about him, and interfere with the low, trifling affairs of mankind. But such is God's goodness and condescension, that he humbles himself, not only to inspect, but to govern the things that are done upon earth. But *what is man that he should visit him,* not with the meer demonstrations of kindness, which other creatures also experience; but that God should visit him, *by sending his son into the world, that the world thro' him might be saved?* and this when mankind had most heinously offended God by their sins, and deserved to be for ever rejected and forgotten by him.

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† Psal. 8. 4. 144. 3.

This as far exceeds our imaginations as deserts ; and is so wonderful, that some make it a pretence for infidelity, as being an instance of mercy too great to be believed.

The sceptics of our age are ever cavilling against matters of revelation, more especially at this fundamental article of our Saviour's incarnation. For suppose, say they, " God intended to offer terms of salvation to mankind, yet this might be done without sending *the son of God into the world*. Had not God easier methods to effect this, than by the *incarnation and crucifixion of his Son*? Is it not more credible, that God should forgive sin without any atonement, than send his son to be a sacrifice of propitiation to himself ? Is it not enough for us to believe all the principles of natural religion ; for we own a God and providence, a life to come, rewards and punishments ; but why must our faith be loaded with incredible mysteries, to believe the Son of God's coming into the world in such manner as is described by the Evangelists ? This, so far from being a kindness to the world, makes the condition of salvation much harder, if we must believe what is so impossible, and difficult to be reconciled with the natural principles of reason and religion ." I will not dispute whether this zeal for natural religion, is real or pretended, but shall endeavour to make it appear, that whoever embraces the principles of natural religion, can have no reason to reject those of the christian, even as to this article of God's sending his son into the world, at which they seem most to stumble.

I shall then attempt to prove, that the christian religion not only supposes, but improves, refines, establishes and enforces the general and most allowed principles of natural religion ; as to the being of God and providence, the most agreeable way of worship,

the nature and kinds of moral duties, the rewards and punishments of another world ; since no one can deny that the christian religion is very exact and particular in these things, above any other institution whatever ; and therefore there is far less reason to quarrel with christianity, than any other religion. Let our sceptics view the unchristian world, and they will find such foolish notions, vain superstitions, incoherent fables, and immoral practices allowed by their several religions, as to make a considering man wonder, how the notion of religion could be so debased among men. Let them examine former ages, and they will find false gods, and false worship established in opposition to the true ; a worship *perfectly disagreeable* to the divine nature, by mean representations, impure rites and barbarous sacrifices ; such innumerable defects in their own principles of morality, as to conjugal society, the rights of property, and preservation of mankind ; also such low representations of future rewards and punishments, as seem more like fables, than worthy of any wise man's notice and regard. But I dare challenge the most cavilling sceptic to find any just fault with the duties of christianity ; for the worship of God therein required, is pure, holy, spiritual, very agreeable to the divine nature and the common reason of mankind. The moral precepts of it are clear, weighty, and comprehensive. Those who delivered them to us, neither commend any vice, nor sink the reputation of any virtue ; they never lessen our duties to God, or to one another ; all the complaint is, that the precepts are too strict, severe and difficult for mankind to practise. But is this an objection against our religion ? or not rather against mankind ? We hope the blame then is not to be charged on reason or religion, that men will not understand nor resolve to do their duty, but on themselves.

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It shall then be my endeavour to prove, that the principles of natural religion, make the design of God's sending his son into the world to appear very credible, and fit for men of sense and understanding to believe. My reasons for this are; first, that the great end of *Christ's* coming into the world, was the salvation of mankind; and this is most agreeable to God's infinite wisdom and goodness. Who ever believes a God, must for the same reason be convinced, that he is a being of infinite goodness and wisdom; these being essential and inseparable attributes of the divine nature. And supposing mankind to be compounded of soul and body, capable of pleasure and satisfaction both in this and another world; as having a soul of an immortal nature, that will for ever subsist in happiness or misery after this life; (for otherwise future rewards and punishments will signify nothing:) The question then is, which is most agreeable to the infinite wisdom and goodness of God, either to continue mankind in this low and gloomy region for ever, or advance them into a far better place and company, there to enjoy noble and divine delights, not depending on a fading dying life, but on the enjoyment of complete and perpetual happiness both of soul and body. There can be no comparison between these things, if they are duly and seriously considered. So that the salvation tendered by the gospel, is the most agreeable end, which the wisdom and goodness of God could contrive for the benefit of mankind. But perhaps some will object, that there is no reason to hope for, or expect a happiness, so transcending our deserts. This objection would be the more reasonable, were we to suppose the rewards of another life came from any other fountain than God's infinite goodness, towards those who sincerely love and endeavour to please him, tho' with many failings and imperfections.

sections. But this is what we maintain to be the christian doctrine. And is this repugnant to the wisdom and goodness of God? What was it but infinite goodness which at first gave being to the world, made it so useful and beneficial to mankind, and hath preserved it ever since? What is it, but infinite goodness, that suffers us to live and enjoy so many comforts of life, after our great and continued provocations? Were we to argue from our deserts, it would be impossible to justify the wonderful patience of God, towards the sinful race of mankind, who have long since deserved to be utterly destroyed. If we consider how the justice and holiness of God, is daily provoked to punish offenders, and that he hath power to execute his justice in a moment, without any to oppose or resist him; we have reason to be astonished at that exceeding patience and forbearance of God, which all such every day experience. Nor is this all; for he not only suffers them to live, but often makes their condition here, easy and prosperous, giving them health, riches and honour, and the hopes that their posterity shall enjoy the same after them. These things to such as do not believe or value another life, are the greatest blessings God can confer on them. But if they can allow so much goodness in God, towards those who continually offend him; why should they question greater instances of it in another world, towards those that endeavour to please him? Why then is it more unreasonable for God to bestow the happiness of another life, on those who esteem and chuse it, than to give temporal blessings to such as love and admire it? not that this wisdom is equal in the choice, but the goodness of God is wonderful in both. And there is no reason to suppose, that God, should be less kind to those who love him best. But then it is vain to think of being saved by Christ's coming into the world, unless

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we heartily love God and keep his commandments ; the design of the gospel being to persuade us to the one, in order to our obtaining the other ; therefore it is not hope, but a fond imagination to expect salvation by Christ on any other terms. If then we take the whole true scheme of Christianity together, it is this ; *God sent his Son into the world, that the world thro' him might be saved* ; not by continuing in the sinful practices of this world, which St. John calls, *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life* * ; but by subduing and mortifying all disorderly passions, and preparing for a better state : So that if we have a firm persuasion of the goodness of God, of which we may be convinced by natural reason ; why should it be thought hard to believe, that God should have in view so great and good an end, as the eternal salvation of those who truly love and obey him.

The next principle agreeable to natural reason and religion is, that salvation, or a future state of happiness, cannot be expected without the particular favour of God. Whoever owns natural religion, must agree that the soul of man is an immortal thinking being ; its happiness then must consist in thinking on such things, as afford the greatest pleasure and satisfaction : But what can we conceive sufficient to entertain and please the mind, when the soul is dislodged from this cloudy mansion the body ? Will it be to reflect on the past pleasures of the body ? No, certainly ; for these cannot now bear a severe reflection, the thoughts of them making men very uneasy : For the most tempting pleasures of sin, leave no grateful relish behind them. Or, can the mind lull itself asleep, and cease thinking ? But this would be a kind of annihilation. Indeed, there is a state of *unthinking* in this world, I mean when the mind is so full of trifling vain ima-

ginations, as to leave no room for one serious thought: But this is impossible in another state. Nothing then will support or comfort the mind, but what will bear a most strict and severe scrutiny; it must be true and real good, durable and lasting, complete and perfect, to gratify all the just and reasonable desires of an immortal soul; and what can this be less than God himself? And therefore the christian religion speaks most agreeably to natural reason, when it supposes the happiness of another world, to consist in the presence and enjoyment of God.

This prospect of another state, or the *salvation of mankind by Christ Jesus*, opens us a view of what relates to the Son of God's coming into the world. And if our minds are possessed with such great apprehensions of the power and greatness of the world; let us then consider the manner of God's sending his son into the world; as his being born of an obscure virgin, laid in a common manger, bred in a private place, having so mean followers, meeting with so cold a reception, and at last exposed to an ignominious death; all these are circumstances of great reproach and contempt: But, on the other side, could we here raise our minds to such ideas of things, as the glorious spirits have above, who esteem things according to the ends and purposes they are designed for, we should then perceive how these methods contributed to God's great end; which was to wean men from the pomp and vanity of this world, and prepare them for a better. The design of Christ's coming, was to deliver the souls of men from their own sinful passions and the devil's tyranny: But he did not come in a way of violence, to break open the prison doors, and instantly knock off their fetters and set them free; but he uses all gentle and effectual methods of persuasion, both by words and his own example,

example, that they might despise this world, and prepare for another, where their happiness will be inconceivable and without end.

Another principle of natural religion is, that God's favour is not to be expected, so long as his displeasure continues against mankind for sin, and that no effectual means are used to remove it. In truth, the gospel scheme turns on this point; whether God was really so displeased with mankind for their sins as to need a reconciliation? For if what the scripture declares concerning God's wrath and displeasure against men for sin, be only figurative expressions, then the design of the gospel must be given up, as a mere scheme; since if God was not really displeased, there would be no need of reconciliation; if that was not wanted, *Christ's* coming to reconcile us to God, was needless; and if he did not come for that end, we have no reason to believe the scripture which so frequently affirms it: Nor can there be a stronger argument produced to prove a thing, than that the most emphatical expressions are so often applied to that purpose, by persons who used all sincerity and plainness. But tho' the scripture is very clear herein, yet this is not my present business; which is to consider the natural sense and reason of mankind as to this matter. But as an infinite perfect being, cannot in reason be supposed to have any such passion, as we call wrath and anger in men; therefore wrath in God must be interpreted to mean, a just cause of displeasure given by us, and deserving his punishment, unless it be removed. Whether there is any such just cause of displeasure, must depend on the natural differences of good and evil; and whoever exercises his reason, cannot judge amiss in this matter: Not that all the differences of good and evil are equally clear, no more than all propositions in the mathematics. It is sufficient to the present purpose, that the greater instances

stances and more general principles are so. And can any one of common sense imagine, that God is as well pleased with him who blasphemeth his name, despises his service, and hates religion, as with one who fears, honours, and endeavours to please him? Can he be as well pleased with him who assassinates his parents, as with him who obeys them? With him that robs and defrauds his neighbour, as with him that relieves his necessities? With him who encourages disorderly passions, as with him who subdues them? With him who is cruel, inhuman, and perfidious, as with him who is faithful, just, and compassionate? These are only a few instances of the difference between good and evil; but they are so plain and notorious, that a man must renounce the common principles of humanity, who does not acknowledge them: And if there is such a real difference in the nature of human actions, and God a strict observer of them, which he must be, as he is a being of infinite holiness and justice; he cannot but be offended with mankind's wilful omission of what they know to be good, and commission of what they know to be evil.

But then we must distinguish between God's displeasure against actions and persons; the former is the necessary effect of sin, which can never be removed, God being irreconcileable to sin. But those who commit sin are his creatures, and capable of mercy and forgiveness. Punishment is the natural desert of sin; but in punishing sinners, the great and wise governor of the world acts not by necessity of nature, but by the methods of wisdom and justice. And if the saving of sinners on their repentance, can be made agreeable to these his attributes, such is the mercy and goodness of God to his creatures, that there is great reason to hope for a reconciliation. For tho' God may be displeased, he is not implacable; and tho' justly provoked to punish

nish sinners, yet there is no absolute necessity nor irreversible decree to oblige him to it ; and therefore, notwithstanding this displeasure of God, there is still a way left for reconciliation, which leads me to another natural principle ; namely,

That if God is thus displeased with the sins of mankind, and there is a possibility of reconciliation between God and them ; then he alone is the most proper and competent judge on what terms he will be reconciled ; for being both the offended party and supreme governor, he hath the sole and only right to fix the terms and conditions, on which he will forgive sins, and receive the offenders to favour. It is weak and absurd to oppose one attribute of God against another. Some are so vain as to think God will easily forgive sins, because he is merciful ; not considering that he is also just and holy ; and there is as much reason to fear his justice, as to hope for his mercy : So that it is impossible for a considering man to satisfy his own mind, as to God's forgiving his sins, unless he is some way assured he will do it ; and therefore, if God designs to bring men to repentance, by the hopes of forgiveness, this cannot be known but by revelation. But mere repentance can never make any satisfaction to God for the breach of his laws. Suppose a sinner is heartily sorry for all his offences against God, and resolves to do otherwise for the future ; this no doubt is more pleasing to God, than to persevere in offending him. But then this is no more than what a man ought to do, in justice to God and himself ; for he is obliged to vindicate the honour of God's laws, to condemn himself for his own folly, and return to his duty. But this makes no amends to God, for the infinite dishonour done him by the violation of his laws. Among men, the courts of justice take no notice of malefactors repentance ; however such are affected, the laws must be

be observed and offenders punished. No person then, by mere natural reason, can be assured, that God will not be as tender of the honour and justice of his laws, as mankind are allowed to be of theirs, without any imputation of cruelty and injustice. If God should be exact in punishing offenders, who could complain? For who can plead *not guilty* to his maker? When a man's own conscience tells him he hath deserved punishment, there is all reason to expect it, but none to hope for pardon. Therefore to forgive even penitent sinners, is a free act of grace and mercy in God; and upon what terms and conditions he will do it, solely depends on his good pleasure. But the way of reconciliation cannot be known by any principles of nature; because it is a matter of fact, and must have such proof, of which a thing of that nature is capable.

Having thus shewed, how strongly the principles of natural religion, favour the christian doctrine of *God's sending his Son into the world*, in order to our reconciliation with, and salvation by him; it will be necessary to prove, that God justly requires us to believe it true. For he *that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he bath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God; for whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life* *. But can we believe farther than we have reason to believe? No; God does not expect it; but only that with sincere and impartial minds we weigh and consider the evidence, and with great humility beg the assistance of divine grace, without which God may justly leave us to unbelief.

It would be too tedious to produce the several arguments which might be urged, to prove it as evident as a matter of fact can be made; that *God did send his Son, that the world thro' him might be saved,*

* John 3. 18. 16.

saved. I shall therefore only observe, at present, that if the matters of fact are true, as related by the evangelists, there can be no reason to doubt his being *the Son of God*. For he who was the most exact pattern of humility and self-denial, not only frequently assumes this title to himself, and also his disciples affirm the same; but God himself gave the most ample and convincing testimony to it by his miraculous birth, and a voice from heaven at his baptism; by a series of publick and beneficial miracles to attest the truth of his doctrine; by his resurrection from the dead, ascension into heaven, and wonderful effusion of the Holy Ghost, which was attended with strange effects. And whoever believes these things true, has no reason to say, he cannot believe Christ to be the son of God. But if these matters of fact are not to be believed as true, we have no reason to believe any thing but what we see ourselves. For in this case, distance of time and place are equal, nor is there any matter of fact so well attested as these are. For these things were not conveyed by silent tradition, but exposed to public examination; they were not delivered by a few, trusted with a secret; but openly avowed by a great number of competent witnesses who were present; none of whom could be compelled, by the greatest sufferings, to deny, falsify, or conceal any part of their evidence. And these things thus delivered by persons who were most remarkable for their innocence and integrity, were in the next ages examined and enquired into by men of sagacity and learning, who, on the strictest scrutiny, found no reason to suspect their testimony, and therefore heartily embraced and defended the christian faith. From whence they have been conveyed down to us, not by uncertain oral tradition, but by writings of unquestionable authority; wherein, among other doctrines, this is contained,

that

that God sent his Son into the world, for the salvation of mankind.

Let then all who pretend they are willing to believe as much as they can, and those also who incline to infidelity, seriously consider with themselves; whether there can be a greater and nobler design, more becoming the wisdom, power, and goodness of God to engage in, than that of rescuing mankind out of misery, and shewing them a certain way to eternal happiness? Whether such a design must not be discovered in some particular age of the world, with all the circumstances relating thereto? Whether that age was not the most proper, wherein the chief prophecies of the *Messiah's* coming were to be accomplished? Whether, because it is possible for some to deceive, there is reason to infer, that there is nothing but illusion and imposture in the world, and that all men lye and deceive for the sake of doing it? But if a difference is to be made between men and their testimonies, then we are to examine the different characters of truth and falsehood, and according to them give our assent. And if, after the severest examination, we find not sufficient reason to believe, *that God sent his Son into the world, for the salvation of mankind*, upon such testimonies as are given of it; we must conclude all mankind to be made up of fraud and imposture, and that there is no sincerity and honesty in the world: Which are reproaches so severe on human nature, as none can be guilty of, who have any regard to it. Surely then, it is a great advantage to the truth of our religion, that it cannot be rejected, but by such methods as equally destroy all truth and certainty; the faith of christianity standing on the same bottom with the common faith of mankind: And if we reject such assurance as is offered for the faith of the gospel, our infidelity cannot be the effect of reason and argument, but of

of suspicion and mistrust of the best part of mankind ; who have most firmly believed the truth of these things, and led the most holy exemplary lives, in hopes of a blessed immortality. And if the testimony of any persons merit regard, it must be of such as could have no design on this world, but were resolved by faith and patience to prepare for a better.

Let none then who profess themselves christians, be ever discouraged by any attempts of infidels, to let go the anchor of their hope, or mistrust the foundation of their faith ; but we must not think our faith will avail us, unless our lives are answerable thereto. The Son of God who assumed our nature, requires that we should imitate the perfections of *his*. A daily progress in virtue is the indispensable duty of every disciple of the blessed Jesus. And whoever attentively considers the wonderful display of God's mercy to us in his incarnation, can want no motive to praise, adoration, and love. Let us then contemplate a little on this amazing instance of divine goodness. As the book of nature furnishes us with the clearest and most convincing manifestations of God's wisdom and power ; so does his revealed word supply us with the most ample testimonies of the wonders of his love. That the Son of God should become man, that the children of men might become the sons of God ; that he should clothe himself with our infirmities, to raise us to a participation of his perfections ; should suffer want, that we may abound ; make himself an offering for sin, to free his rebellious creatures from the guilt and dominion of it ; and die the death of a malefactor, that we might live for ever with him in eternal glory : These are such instances of infinite love, as could only proceed from himself. This is such a method of salvation, as wretched mortals could never

never have expected; such as the most sanguine mind could not have hoped for. What breast does not glow with grateful resentments upon the very mention of this stupendous love? Who can consider it without being lost in adoration, praise, and thanksgiving? Who can view this wonderful condescension, and these sufferings for sin, without detesting and resolving to forsake it? Who does not say within himself, with the greatest indignation, how can I live any longer in sin, who am redeemed from my iniquities by the blood of Christ? Well therefore might the apostle call this doctrine a *mystery of godliness*. A mystery, which gives us the most exalted notions of divine love, to warm our hearts with a due sense of it; which, if there be any sparks of ingenuity or gratitude in our souls, must kindle it into a divine flame, an unfeigned love, and pure affection! A mystery, which must depress the man as much as it exalts the christian; make him desirous of purifying himself; and thirst for nothing so much as to become a new creature! A mystery, which by shewing us our approach to, and deliverance from the jaws of hell, gives us the nearest prospect of the joys of heaven, and the surest pledge and assurance to us, that he, who has already done so much towards it, will not stop till he has compleated the great work of our salvation.

Blessed be God, for ever blessed be his holy name, who hath found out a way for our deliverance, and hath raised up for us a mighty salvation; that we, being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, may serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life. Praise therefore the Lord, O our soul, and all that is within us, praise his holy name; and forget not all his benefits, who forgiveth all our iniquities, and healeth all our diseases; who hath redeemed our life from destruction, and hath crowned us with loving

loving kindness and tender mercies. What shall we now return unto him, who came down from his imperial throne, and infinitely debasing himself, and eclipsing the brightness of his glorious majesty, became a servant, nay, suffered the ignominious death of the cross for our sakes, that he might raise us to eternal bliss and glory.

To him therefore let us offer up our souls, bodies, and spirits, not only to be saved, but to be ruled and governed by him. Let us humbly beg of him, that he will be pleased to finish that work in us, which he came into the world for ; that by his blood he will cleanse and wash us from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit ; that he will save us from our sins, and then we shall escape everlasting misery hereafter.

DISCOURSE XIX. Bp. Tillotson.

Man's salvation effected, by the death and satisfaction of Christ.

Heb. 9. 26.

But now once hath he appeared in the end of the world, to take away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

Among many other great ends and reasons, for which God was pleased to send his son into the world, to dwell among us, one of the chief was, that by a long course of the greatest innocence, and most bitter suffering in our nature, he might make a perfect expiation of sin. *But now* once

*once in the end of the world**, that is, the last age of the world, which is the gospel age, *bath he appeared to take away sin by the sacrifice of himself*. The general design of God in sending his son into the world, was to save mankind from eternal death and misery, and to purchase for them eternal life and happiness. For *God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life* †. But in order to obtain this salvation, all impediments and hinderances must be removed; these were the *guilt and dominion of sin*. By the *guilt of sin* we became obnoxious to God's wrath and eternal condemnation; and by the *defilement and dominion* of it, we were incapable of enjoying the happiness of heaven, and the reward of eternal life. To remove these impediments, two things were necessary; the *forgiveness of our past sins*, and the *future reformation of our lives*. Indeed both these, had God so pleased, might have been effected by the abundant mercy and powerful grace of God, without this wonderful method and dispensation, of sending his son in our nature, *to take away sin by the sacrifice of himself*. But the wisdom of God has thought fit to make use of this way and method for our salvation, and no doubt for very good reasons, of which the following, among others, seem very obvious and considerable.

First, to vindicate the honour of his laws, which would have been despised had sin gone wholly unpunished. For had God proclaimed a general pardon of sin, to all mankind, without any expression of his wrath and displeasure against it, who would have reverenced his laws, or in earnest believed, that the violation of them was offensive to him, or dangerous to the sinner. Therefore God, to maintain the honour of his laws, rather than sin should

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* Heb. 9. 26. † John 3. 16.

go unpunished, inflicted the punishment of it upon his only begotten son, a person the nearest and dearest to him; which is a greater testimony of his high displeasure against sin, and his tender regard for the honour of his laws, than if the sinner had suffered for it in his own person.

Secondly, another considerable reason of this dispensation, was, God's forgiving sin in such a way, as effectually to discourage and discountenance it, and create the greatest horror and hatred of it, in the sinner; which an absolute pardon, without any punishment inflicted, or satisfaction made to the honour of his justice, could not have done. For had sin been so easily forgiven, who would have thought it a great evil, or been afraid to offend. But when God makes his own son a sacrifice, and inflicts on him the punishment due for our iniquities, this is a full demonstration that God hates sin; it plainly shews what sin deserves, and the sinner may justly expect, if after God has declared such severity against it, he will again venture to offend. And if this sacrifice for sin, and the pardon purchased by it, be not effectual to reclaim us from sin, and beget in us an eternal dread and detestation of it; if we sin wilfully after so clear a revelation of the wrath of God from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, there remains no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation to consume the adversary. For what could God do more to testify his displeasure against sin, and discountenance the practice of it, than to make his only son an offering for sin, to have him wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities? In what clearer glass can we at once behold the great evil of sin, and the infinite goodness and mercy of God to sinners, than in the sorrows and sufferings of the Son of God, for our sins, and for our sakes.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, another reason of this dispensation, seems to have been a gracious condescension and compliance of almighty God, with a certain apprehension and persuasion, which had early and universally obtained among mankind, concerning the expiation of sin, and appeasing the offended deity by sacrifices ; as those of living creatures, birds and beasts ; and afterwards by human sacrifices, *the blood of their sons and daughters, offering their first born for their transgression, the fruit of their body for the sin of their soul.* This notion of expiating sin by sacrifice, however it first came, whether by *divine revelation or tradition*, hath of all other notions in religion, except those of the *being of God, and his providence, and the recompences of another life,* found the most universal reception, and been the most generally practised in all ages and nations of the world. And indeed, a great part of the *jewish religion*, which was instituted by God himself, seems plainly to have been a condescension to the general apprehension of mankind, of appeasing the offended deity by sacrifices ; as it was also a figure of that great and efficacious sacrifice, which should in due time be offered to God, to make atonement for all the sins of mankind. From hence the apostle to the *Hebrews* takes occasion to recommend the *new covenant and dispensation of the gospel*, as having a greater and more perfect *high-priest*, and a more excellent sacrifice than were the *high-priests and sacrifices under the law* ; the *son of God having by one sacrifice of himself, obtained eternal redemption for us, and perfected for ever them that are sanctified.* And with this apprehension of sacrifices, not to countenance but to abolish it, God was pleased to comply so far, as to make a general atonement for the sins of mankind, by the death of his son appearing in our nature, to become a voluntary sacrifice for us ; God permitting him to be unjustly put to

to death, and his blood to be shed by the malice of men, in appearance as a malefactor, but in truth a martyr : And accepting of his death, as a meritorious sacrifice and propitiation for the sins of the whole world : That by this wise counsel and permission of his providence, he might for ever put an end to that barbarous and inhuman way of serving God, which had been so long in use and practice among them. The son of God, by the voluntary sacrifice of himself, has effected all that at once and for ever, which mankind from the beginning of the world, had in vain been endeavouring to accomplish by innumerable and continual sacrifices ; namely, the pardon of their sins, perfect peace and reconciliation with God. For these ends and reasons, and perhaps many more equally great and considerable, tho' not to be discovered by our shallow understandings, the wisdom of God determined upon this way and method of delivering mankind from the guilt and dominion of sin, by the sacrifice of his son. For this purpose it was requisite, that he should appear in our nature, and dwell among us, some considerable time, that by a long course of the greatest innocency, and sufferings in our nature, he might be capable of making a perfect expiation of sin. For perfect innocency, and obedience, and great sufferings in our nature even to death, the scripture declares, were the necessary qualifications of a person capable to make expiation for sin ; and all these were found in the person of our blessed Saviour.

First, unspotted innocency, and perfect obedience. This the scripture testifies of his life and actions. *He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin ; he always did the things which pleased God.* *He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth †.* And this was a necessary qualification, whether we consider

† Heb. 4. 15. John 8. 29. 1 Pet. 2. 22.

consider him as a priest, or a sacrifice. As a priest, he could not have been fit to make expiation for the sins of others, had he not been without sin himself. And this the apostle tells us, is one great advantage of our *high priest* under the *gospel*, above the *high priest* under the *law*, who being a sinner himself, as well as those for whom he offered, had need to offer for himself, before he could make a legal expiation for the sins of others. For an effectual expiation for sin, cannot be made but by an *high priest*, who himself is holy and innocent. Such an *high priest*, says the apostle *, became, or was necessary for us, under the dispensation of the gospel, *as is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners; who needs not, as the high priest under the law, to offer up sacrifice first for his own sins, and then for the people.* Meaning, that he who will be qualified to make atonement for the sins of others, must himself be without sin. And if we consider *Christ* as a sacrifice for sin, perfect holiness is necessary to make a sacrifice acceptable and available for the expiation of sin. The necessity of this was typified by the quality of the expiatory sacrifices under the *law*. The beasts offered, were to be *without spot and blemish*. To this the apostle alludes, saying, *how much more shall the blood of Christ, who thro' the eternal spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your consciences from dead works to serve the living God.* And, *ye were not redeemed with corruptable things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot* †. Intimating, that nothing less than the perfect innocence and holiness of the person sacrificed, could expiate the guilt of our sins, and purchase for us eternal redemption.

Secondly, great sufferings also in our nature, even to death, were requisite to the perfect expiation of sin;

* Heb. 7. 26. 27. † 9. 14. 1 Pet. 18, 19.

sin; for all expiating sacrifices were to be slain. And it was a constant maxim and principle among the Jews, and which seems to be confirmed by the apostle, that *without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins.* Not but God could have pardoned sin, without satisfaction made to his justice, by the suffering of a sinner, or accepting a sacrifice in his stead; but according to the method and dispensation, which the wisdom of God had resolved on, he was determined not to dispense with the forgiveness of sins in any other way. For which he seems to have possessed mankind with the persuasion, that *sin was not to be expiated but by blood;* either by the death of the sinner, or of the sacrifice. Now the life of our blessed Saviour, as well as his death, was made up of continual sufferings, from his cradle to his cross; and the greatest that ever were, considering the dignity of the person, and the nature of his sufferings, which were wholly undeserved on his part; he submitting himself to them for our sakes, and suffering them for our sins.

Had our blessed Saviour been a meer man, the perfect innocency and unspotted purity of his whole life; his zeal and delight to do the will of God; his infinite pains and unweared diligence, *in going about, doing good;* his constant obedience to God in the most difficult instances; and his persevering in well doing, notwithstanding the ill usage, bitter reproaches and persecutions he met with, from a wicked and ill natured world; his perfect submission to the will of God; his invincible patience under the greatest and bitterest sufferings; and his infinite charity to his enemies and persecutors; these must needs be highly acceptable to God, and could man merit of God, might perhaps avail for the sins of others. But our Saviour and Sacrifice being the Son of God in our nature, and voluntarily assuming and submitting to the condition of humanity

ty in its most miserable state, sin only excepted ; and being contented to live a life of doing good, and suffering evil, and at last to be slain a sacrifice for us ; all this, added to the dignity of the person, and his dearness to God, must needs render such perfect obedience, and patient sufferings, a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. And this being performed and accepted by God, as done on our account, may reasonably be presumed to redound to our benefit and advantage, as much as if we had performed it, in our own persons. For what more available satisfaction could the justice of God require, for the sins of all mankind, than the voluntary obedience and sufferings of human nature, in a person of so great dignity and dearness to God, as his eternal and entirely beloved Son. And that the expiation of sin was made by the sufferings of Christ in our stead, I shall endeavour to prove by several reasons.

First, I shall produce some plain testimonies of holy scripture, which clearly and fully declare, that the Son of God, in order to the effectual expiation of sin, suffered in our stead, bore the wrath of God, and made a perfect atonement for our sins, and obtained eternal redemption for us. I will only mention some few of those many texts which might be cited. *He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin* * ; that is, God hath made Christ, who had no sin, a sacrifice for our sins : again, *Walk in love as Christ also hath loved us, and given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God* †. So St. Peter, *Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh*. Here Christ is said to suffer for sin ; and that the apostle did not only mean, he suffered on occasion of our sins, but in the place and stead of the

* 2 Cor. 5. 21. † Ephes. 5. 10.

the sinner, it is added, *the just for the unjust*, that is the son of God, who was innocent, and had no sin, suffered for us, who were sinners. *He bare our sins in his own body on the tree.* Again, *this is my commandment*, saith our Saviour, *that ye love one another, as I have loved you* ||. How is that? why it follows, *greater love than this has no man, that he lays down his life for his friend* †; or is contented to die in his stead; and so writes St. Paul, *when ye were yet sinners, in due time Christ died for the ungodly*. Now the question is, whether by this expression of *Christ's dying for the ungodly*, is meant, that he only died for the benefit and advantage of sinners, but not in their stead? this the following words determine; *scarcely for a righteous man will one die, yet peradventure for a good man, one would even dare to die; but God commendeth his love to us, in that whilst we were sinners Christ died for us*. By which it is plain, the apostle here speaks of *Christ's dying for sinners* in the same sense as one man is said to die for another, or save another from death; which is to die in his stead. It is evident then from scripture, that *Christ* died not only for our advantage, but in our stead, as really and truly as any man ever did, or can die for another, who lays down his life to save another from death. For if *Christ* had not died, we had perished everlastinglly. And because he died, we are saved from eternal death and misery. And tho' in scripture this is not mentioned, by the name or term of *satisfaction*, yet it is there said to be *the price of our redemption*, which surely is the same thing. For being sinners, we are liable, I may say, indebted to the justice of God; and the son of God, by his death and sufferings in our nature, hath discharged this obligation, and paid this debt for us; which being done by the shedding of *Christ's blood*, and that God is graciously

|| John 15. 12. 13. † Rom. 6. 6, 7, 8.

pleased to accept of it, for the debt we owe to his justice, and to declare himself fully contented with it; and since without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins; why it may not properly enough be called payment or satisfaction, I cannot understand! Not that God was angry with his son, when he laid on him the iniquities of us all; no, he was never better pleased, than when he became obedient to the death, even the death of the cross, and bore our sins in his own body on the tree. Nor yet that our Saviour suffered, what the sinner should, the proper pains and torments of the damned; but only that his obedience and sufferings were of that value and esteem with God, and his voluntary sacrifice of himself, so well pleasing to him, that he thereupon entered into a covenant of grace and mercy with mankind, wherein he hath engaged to forgive the sins of those who believe and repent, and to make them partakers of eternal life. But I proceed,

Secondly, to shew, that the expiation of our sins was made by the sufferings of Christ, taken from the nature and intention of *expiatory sacrifices*, both among *Jews* and *Heathens*. Now the nature and design of *expiatory sacrifices* was plainly this; to substitute one *living creature*, to suffer and die instead of another, so that what the sinner deserved to suffer, was supposed to be done to the sacrifice, which was slain as an atonement for the sinner. And tho' there was no reason to hope for any such effect from the blood of bulls and goats, or other living creatures, yet this is what both *Jews* and *Heathen* did expect. And God, in compliance with such apprehensions of mankind, was pleased to find out such a sacrifice, as I before observed, that should really and effectually procure for them the great blessing, of the *forgiveness of sins*, which they had long hoped for, from the multitude of their sacrifices. And the apostle to the *Hebrews* doth in a

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large discourse shew the great virtue and efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ, to the purpose of remission of sins, above those under the law. This was also signified by the *Jewish passover*, wherein the lamb was slain, and the sinner did escape. In allusion whereto Christ is called the *passover*, or *paschal lamb*, who was slain that we might escape; *Christ our passover is slain*, or *offered for us* †; that is, He by the gracious appointment of God was substituted to suffer all that in our stead, which the *paschal lamb* was supposed to suffer for the sinner. Again, it is said, that *Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many* *; plainly alluding to the sacrifices under the law, which did, as it were, bear the faults of the sinner.

And that this expression of Christ's being *offered to bear our sins*, cannot be meant of his taking away our sins by his holy doctrine, which was confirmed by his death; but of his bearing our sins by way of *imputation*, and by his suffering for them in our stead, as the sacrifice was supposed to do for the sinner: This, I say, is evident beyond all denial, from the difference between his *first* and *second* appearance. *Christ*, says the Apostle, *was once offered to bear our sins*; *but unto them that look for him, he shall appear a second time without sin, unto salvation* ‡. But did he not appear the first time without sin? Yes certainly, as to any inherent guilt; for the scripture tells us, *he had no sin*. What then is the meaning of the difference, that at his *first* coming he *bore our sins*, but at his *second* coming he *shall appear without sin unto salvation*? Why, the words can have no other sense, but that at his *first* coming, he sustained the person of a sinner, and suffered instead of us; but at his *second* coming he shall appear, not as a *sacrifice*, but as a *judge*, to confer the reward of eternal life upon those, who are partakers of the benefit of that

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sacrifice,

† 1 Cor. 5. 7. * Heb. 9. 28. ‡ Heb. 9. 28.

Thirdly, I shall vindicate this method and dispensation of the divine wisdom, from the objections which are brought against it, and shew that there is nothing in it unreasonable, or unworthy of God.

First, it is objected that this method, of the *expiation* of sin by the sufferings of Christ, seems to argue some defect and want of goodness in God, as if he needed some external motive, and was not himself disposed to forgive sinners. To which I answer, that God did not want goodness to have forgiven sin *freely*, without any satisfaction; but his wisdom thought best, not to give encouragement to sin, by too easy a forgiveness, without some remarkable instance of his severe displeasure against it; and therefore his greater goodness and compassion to mankind, devised this way to save the sinner. For God to save us any way, was excessive goodness and mercy, but to do it, by substituting his dearly beloved son, to suffer in our stead, is a condescension so amazing, that had not God been pleased to stoop to it, man could not almost without blasphemy, have thought of, or desired it.

Secondly, it is asked, how can our sins be freely forgiven, when the pardon of them was so dearly purchased, and so mighty a price paid for it! I answer, 1st. It should be considered, that it is a wonderful grace and favour of God, to admit of this translation of the punishment due to us, and accept the sufferings of another in our stead, and for our benefit; when he might justly have exacted it of us in person. So that even in this respect, we are as St. Paul says, *justified freely by his grace thro' the redemption that is in Jesus Christ*: And freely too in respect of any necessity that lay upon God to forgive us, either in this or any other way. For

it was a free act of his goodness to save us, even by the satisfaction and sufferings of his own son. *Thirdly.* It was in effect freely too, notwithstanding the mighty price paid for our redemption; because it was not of our own procuring, but *God found out this ransom for us*; and will any man say that a prince who prevails with his son to intercede for the pardon of a rebel, and even to suffer some punishment, or pay a fine for the obtaining of it, does not in effect, and in all equitable construction, forgive him freely?

Thirdly, It is yet further objected, that this seems more unreasonable than the sacrificing of *beasts* among the *Jews*, or of *Heathens* sacrificing of men and *their sons and daughters*; because this is offering up the *son of God*, the most innocent, and excellent person that ever was. To which I answer, that if we consider the *manner* and *design* of it, the thing will appear quite otherwise. As to the *manner* of it, God did not command his son to be sacrificed, but only his providence permitted the wickedness and violence of men to put him to death, and then his goodness and wisdom did overrule this worst of actions to the best of ends. And if we consider the matter right, how is this any more a reflection upon the holy providence of God, than any enormities and cruelties, which by his permission are daily committed in the world? And then if we reflect on the *end* and *design* of this permission of Christ's death, and the application of it to the purpose of a general expiation; we cannot but acknowledge, and even adore the gracious and merciful design of it. For by this means God did at once put an end to that unreasonable and bloody way of worship, which had been so long practised, all other sacrifices having ever since ceased in all parts of the world where christianity prevails.

Fourthly, the last objection is, the injustice and cruelty of an innocent person's suffering. To this I reply, that they who insist so much on this objection, seem to give a full and clear answer to it themselves, by acknowledging, as they expressly do, that our Saviour suffered all this for our *benefit* and *advantage*, tho' not in our *place and stead*. This is plainly to give up the cause, unless they can shew, why there is not as much injustice and cruelty, in an innocent person's suffering for the benefit and advantage of a malefactor, as to suffer in his *stead*? which, in effect, and by necessary consequence, is granting the very thing they *deny*. The truth is, there is no injustice or cruelty in either case; neither in an innocent person's suffering for the *benefit* of an offender, nor in his *stead*; supposing the sufferings to be voluntary; they having equally the same appearances of injustice and cruelty; there being as little reason why an *innocent person* should suffer for the *benefit* of a *criminal*, as for his suffering in his *stead*. So that I hope this *objection*, which, above all others, has been so inviduously urged, now receives a just answer. And I believe, was the matter searched to the bottom, all contention about our Saviour's sufferings for our *benefit*, but not in our *stead*, will signify just nothing. For if Christ died for our *benefit*, so as by virtue of his death and sufferings, to save us from the wrath of God, and procure our escape from eternal death; this, I apprehend, is all that any body means by his dying in our *stead*. For he that dies with an intention to do that *benefit* to another, as to save him from death, doth certainly die in his *place and stead*.

The Socinians say, that our Saviour's voluntary obedience and sufferings did procure his exaltation at the right hand of God, and power and authority to forgive sins, and to give eternal life to as many as he pleased;

pleased ; so that they grant, that his obedience and sufferings in the meritorious consequence of them, do redound to our benefit, and advantage, as much as we, only they are loth, in express terms, to acknowledge that Christ died in our *stead*; for no other reason that I can imagine, but because they have denied it so long and often. But I appeal to the ingenuity of our adversaries, whether on their part, it is not a meer controversy about words. For suppose a malefactor condemned to some grievous punishment, and the king's son, to save him therefrom, contentedly submits to great disgrace and sufferings ; in reward of which sufferings, the king takes his son unto his throne, and sets him on his right hand, and gives him power to pardon this malefactor, and upon a fitting submission and *repentance*, to advance him to honour ; will not any man in this case allow, that the king's son suffered instead of this malefactor, and smile at the man who says, that indeed he *suffered* for him, but yet denies that he was *punished* for him ; to allow he bore the inconvenience of his faults, and yet obstinately insist, that the faults of this malefactor were not laid on him, or so imputed to him, as to have it said, he suffered in his *stead*? This is just the case, and the difference is only in words.

Having thus dismissed the argument, I shall make a few short, but useful reflections, on this great doctrine of our religion ; and the consideration, that the son of God was made a sacrifice for us, and exposed to such bitter sufferings, and so cruel a death, for the expiation of our sins, should create in us the greatest dread and detestation of sin, and for ever deter us from all wilful transgression and disobedience. For if the guilt of our sins was done away on such hard terms, and cost the dearly beloved son of God, so much sweat and blood, then surely we should be very careful, not to renew his passion by

fresh provocations; not to do any thing whereby to crucify the son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. If God did so terribly afflict the dearly beloved of his soul for our sakes; if the son of God was so grievously wounded for our transgressions, and so sorely bruised for our iniquities; if so fearful a storm of vengeance, fell upon the most innocent person that ever was, and for our sins; then we have great reason to regard that kind and merciful admonition of the son of God to sinners, to *sin no more, lest a worse thing, if it be possible, come upon ourselves.*

In this dispensation of God's grace and mercy to mankind, by the death of his son, God seems to have gone to the extremity of things, and almost farther than goodness and mercy will admit; even to afflict innocency itself, to save the guilty. And if herein God hath expressed his hatred of sin, in such a wonderful way of love and kindness to the sons of men, as looks almost like hatred of innocency, and his own son; this ought in all ingenuity and gratitude to our gracious redeemer, *who was made a curse for us, and loved us to that degree as to wash us from our sins in his own blood;* I say this should beget in us, the utmost displeasure against sin, and a more perfect detestation of it, than if we ourselves had suffered the punishment it deserved. We ought to hate sin, as being the occasion of the greatest misfortune, and sorest calamity, to the *best man* that ever was, and to our *best friend*, who suffered them for our sins, and for our sakes.

Since then the *son of God* hath so graciously descended to be made in all things like unto us, *sin only excepted;* let us aspire as much as is possible to become like unto him. Above all, let us hate and avoid sin, as the only thing in which the son of God would have no part with us, tho' he was contented to suffer such bitter things, to save us from the dominion

minion and punishment of it. *He had no sin, yet God was pleased to lay upon him, the iniquities of us all, and to make his soul an offering for sin,* and to permit all that to be done to him, which was due to us. Let us also learn from this admirable pattern, to pity those who are in misery, as Christ hath pitied us; and to save them *who are ready to perish,* for his sake who *came to seek and to save us that were lost.*

In a word, let us in the whole course of our lives, shew forth the virtues of him, *who hath called us out of darkness, into his marvellous light; and hath raised up a mighty salvation for us,* that being delivered from all our spiritual enemies, from sin and all the powers of darkness, we may serve him, who hath *saved us; walking in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our lives.*

Now to him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the lamb that was slain, to God even our father, and our lord Jesus Christ; unto him who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, even whilst we were enemies to him; to him who became man, that he might bring us to God; and assumed our frail, mortal nature, that he might clothe us with immortality and life; to him who died for our sins, and rose again for our justification, and lives for ever to make intercession for us; to him, be glory and dominion, thanksgiving and praise to eternal ages. Amen.

DISCOURSE XX. Clarke.

Of the nature and end of Christ's sufferings.

Pet. 3. 18.

For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.

THE condition, in which the apostle supposes men to have been in, antecedent to their redemption by Christ, is a state of sin and enmity against God. “God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet *sinners*, Christ died for us; and when we were *enemies*, we were reconciled to God, by the death of his son *.” This was most remarkably true of these heathens, who at the first preaching of the gospel were converted to the faith, and baptized into Christ’s religion, and thereby made partakers of the benefits of his death and passion. They were in the most proper sense, enemies of God, having lived in a state of idolatry and unrighteousness, and liable to God’s wrath. “They were dead in trespasses and sins, having walked according to the course of this world; among whom also, *we all* had our conversation, in fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath †.” Not born so by nature, or created so by God, but they were in the same state of ignorance, corruption and wickedness, as the gentiles had been before their conversion to christianity: that is “without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of *Israel*, and strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without

* Rom. 5. 8, 10. † Ephes. 2. 1, 2, 3.

"out God in the world ||." And this is also true in some measure, of the greatest part of christians; who thro' the unhappiness of a bad education, or the temptations of sin, have been engaged in any vicious course, before they were converted and reconciled to God, and became entitled to the benefits of Christ's suffering. And they who have happily escaped the great pollutions in the world thro' sin, yet even these do not conquer the corruptions of their nature, and their propensions to sin, but with difficulty and by degrees; a steady course of piety not being to be obtained, but by great consideration, and a perfect knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; by all which it plainly appears, that these men were in a state of sin and enmity with God, antecedent to their redemption by Christ.

The means by which we are delivered from this evil state, are the sufferings of Christ; *Christ has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust*; that is, the son of God, in order to the effectual expiation of sin, suffered in the sinners stead; and by bearing the wrath of God for us, made a perfect atonement for the sins of all true penitents. Thus Christ is said to have redeemed us by his blood; to have borne our sins in his own body on the tree; to have given himself a sacrifice for us, a propitiation for the sins of the whole world. The meaning of which is, that when men had by sin, incurred the wrath and displeasure of God, our Saviour by taking on himself the punishment of death due to our sins, and by suffering in their stead, and establishing a new covenant for accepting of repentance, delivered them out of that miserable condition. Wherefore the death of Christ, was truly and properly, and in the fullest sense, an expiatory sacrifice, a sufficient satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. Such an atonement, which the wisdom and goodness of God was pleased freely both

both to appoint and accept, as supreme governor of the universe. The design and effect of this redemption was to bring us to God ; that having by his sufferings atoned for our sins, he might restore us to the favour of God, and by establishing a new covenant, might enable all true penitents to obey the condition of it.

The words thus explained, I shall, for the more clearly illustrating the wisdom, justice, and mercy of God, in taking this method for the redemption of mankind, endeavour briefly to prove the following particulars.

1. That it was from the beginning infinitely reasonable, that all possible honour and obedience should be paid to the laws and commands of God, by his creatures. Honour is a duty, peculiarly due to those who are in a superior relation to us. This is implied in the very notion of it ; as God is infinitely greater than any superior on earth can possibly be, so ought we to have a profounder regard and veneration for him. He who created all things by his power, and preserves them all by his goodness, has just reason to demand of his creatures all the honour they can possibly render him. This is evident, if we only consider the attributes of God by the light of nature. His goodness, holiness, justice and mercy, are the most immediate objects of that love and fear, in which consists what we call honouring of God : his infinite power, wisdom and knowledge, are perfections so adorable in the natural sense and judgment of men, that even a heathen could say, ‘ who would not fear and reverence that God, who observes all things, and has a peculiar concern for every action and person in the world.’ The same may be affirmed of the rest of God’s attributes. But the only way to express our honour for God, is by honouring and obeying his laws. We cannot by any honour or regard we can shew

shew, make any addition to God's greatness and majesty ; but by obeying his commandments, and thus honouring his laws, he graciously accepts of this, as done to himself. Them that *honour me, and obey my commandments, I will honour* *. Righteous and good men are described in scripture, as persons who feared, or honoured God ; a life of holiness and obedience is a certain evidence of a mind's being truly affected with a sense of the divine majesty ; and which was the distinguishing character of those who worshipped the true God, in opposition to superstition and idolatry. The same obligation then that we have to fear and honour God, lies upon us to obey and give honour to his laws. And the most abandoned sinners have no way to excuse this their folly and wickedness, but either by denying that they are the laws of God, or by presumptuously imagining, that God will be so merciful, as not to punish the contempt of them, tho' it immediately tends to dishonour himself. A supposition extremely vain and unreasonable ; because,

2. This honour due to the laws of God is diminished by the sins and impieties of men, as far as they can do it. For every sin being a transgression of the law, is a contempt of that authority, by which the law was given ; and therefore by sinning against a divine law, we dishonour God the author of it. *Thou, thro' breaking the law, dishonourest God* †. Every sin a man wilfully commits, being a contempt of the commandments of God, is also a contempt of God himself ; 'tis saying, we will not have him to reign over us. The heinous nature of sin, chiefly consists in this, that it is shewing despite or dishonour to God's authority. Hence are those earnest and affectionate expostulations of the prophets with the people of the *Jews*, for despising the commandments of God, polluting his holy name, and

* Sam. 2. 30. † Rom. 2. 23.

and causing it to be blasphemed among the gentiles, thro' their iniquities * ; and “ because they cast away the law of the Lord of hosts, and despised the word of the holy one of Israël, therefore did God threaten to consume them like stubble with devouring fire †.” Hence the sin of apostacy from christianity is, in the new testament, so highly aggravated by the apostle, as to question its being pardoned ; because *it is doing despite unto the spirit of grace, and crucifying to ourselves the Son of God afresh, and putting him to an open shame* ; which is the greatest dishonour we can possibly do, to the religion and laws of Christ. For this reason, “ who-soever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all ;” because he as truly diminishes and despises the honour and authority of the law, as he who offends in one point : For the same authority that said, *do not commit adultery*, also said, *do not kill* ; if a man commits no adultery, yet if he killeth, he as truly and really transgresses and derogates from the authority of the law, as if he was guilty of more transgressions ; altho’ he is not so great a sinner, nor deserves so severe a punishment.

3. ’Tis reasonable and necessary after such presumptuous transgression, that God should some way vindicate his divine authority. To suppose that God has constituted just and righteous laws, and requires his creatures to obey them, and yet that he will not support their authority, and vindicate the honour of them, when insulted and condemned by any wilful transgression, is contrary to the wisdom of God, and inconsistent with the nature of all government. For tho’ the supreme Lord and governor of all things, may deal as mercifully with his creatures as pleases ; yet he will never be so far indulgent to presumptuous transgressors, as to bring

* Ezek. 20. 27.

† Isai. 5. 24.

bring his laws and authority into contempt: But this must be the consequence, was not God to vindicate the honour of his laws, and shew his displeasure against sin: For how, otherwise, could men be convinced, that the violation of them, is in reality so extremely offensive to him. It can therefore never be supposed, that the all-powerful, infinitely wise, and holy God, who has declared himself tender of his honour, will suffer the violation of his supreme laws, which are of eternal, unchangeable obligation, without vindicating the honour of them. Now the most natural and obvious way of effecting this, is either by punishing the offender to deter him from repeating his offence; or by destroying him, to discourage others more effectually, by this more severe and exemplary punishment from disobeying the same law. When therefore man had transgres'd God's law by sin; God, as governor of the world, was obliged to vindicate his divine authority, and inflict a suitable punishment on him; and because the punishment naturally due and actually threatened to sin, was death; therefore, unless some means could be found out to prevent it, the inflicting this punishment must have been his destruction. But,

4. Because God hates not the persons of sinners, nor hath pleasure in their misery, but only has a just and necessary concern for the honour of his divine and righteous laws, therefore when these are vindicated, his wrath is appeased. God does not punish for punishment's sake; nor to gratify a passion, or satisfy his revenge; for he takes no delight in the destruction of his creatures: *As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked**. The design of God is to make men good and happy; and tho' the wisdom of his government obliges him to vindicate the honour of his laws, by the punishment of offenders, yet we find he does not this, without

* Ezek. 33. 11.

without the utmost regret and compassion; *How shall I give thee up Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, O Israel?* Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together †. God only hates sin; and when he is forced to inflict severe punishments on his creatures, the scripture always represents his doing it with greater reluctance than the most merciful prince, or tender father on earth, punishes the disobedience of his most beloved subject or child; and if he can maintain the authority and honour of his laws without punishment, he never inflicts it.

Lastly, our Saviour by obeying and suffering to death, on our behalf and in our stead, hath, in the most glorious manner, vindicated God's honour and authority; and by establishing a covenant of grace, upon the merits of his sufferings and obedience, has secured to all who truly repent and amend, pardon and remission of sin, consistent with the honour of the divine laws. This is that wonderful composition of justice and mercy, which men and angels forever adore, but can never sufficiently praise and celebrate; here mercy and truth have met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other. The *justice* or *wisdom* of God required, that when men had sinned, the sacred authority of the divine laws should be vindicated by a condign punishment; and our Saviour, by suffering on our behalf and in our stead, has effectually done this. The *mercy* and *goodness* of God required, that those who truly repented and amended, should obtain pardon and remission of their sins; and our Saviour, by establishing a new covenant, upon the events of his sufferings and obedience, has secured to us this grace, consistent with the honour of the divine laws. Had God, out of his infinite goodness, freely vouchsafed a pardon to all past sins, without exacting any satisfaction,

† Hosea 11. 8.

faction, or by accepting of such, as sinful man could have made ; we must indeed have admired the exceeding abundance of his mercy ; but then his infinite hatred against sin, would not have been so clearly displayed. But by God's pardoning the sinner, at the time he inflicts the heaviest punishment of sin, upon the best and most innocent person that ever lived, who voluntarily chose to undergo these sufferings for us : This is a manifest proof, what a tender concern God has for the honour of his laws, and of the fatal consequence of sin.—The lively descriptions given of our Saviour's sufferings, both in the predictions of the prophets, and their accomplishment in the evangelists, are convincing demonstrations of God's hatred against sin, and which are expressed in the most moving and affectionate manner.

“ He is despised and rejected of men ; a
“ man of sorrows and acquainted with grief ; sure-
“ ly he hath born our griefs, and carried our sor-
“ rows ; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten
“ of God, and afflicted : But he was wounded for
“ our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniqui-
“ ties ; the chastisement of our peace was upon
“ him, and with his stripes we are healed ; all we,
“ like sheep, have gone astray, we have turned
“ every one to his own way, and the Lord has
“ laid on him the iniquities of us all ; he was op-
“ pressed and afflicted, yet he opened not his
“ mouth ; he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter,
“ and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so
“ openeth he not his mouth †.” And the account
the evangelists give, of the accomplishment of this
prophecy, should raise in the most obdurate heart,
an eternal hatred of those sins, which caused such
sufferings to the most innocent person that ever
lived ; and inspire us with the most ardent love and
thankfulness, to God who gave, and to our Sa-

vior

† Isa. 53. 3, 4.

viour, who was contented to be a ransom for our stakes.

Thus you have had a brief account, of the reason and method of our redemption by Christ, comprised in the following particulars; namely, that it was from the beginning infinitely reasonable, that all possible honour and obedience, should be paid to the laws and commands of God, by all his creatures: That this honour due to the laws of God is diminished, as far as the sins and impieties of men can do it: That 'tis reasonable and necessary, after such presumptuous transgressions, that God should some way vindicate his divine authority; and the most obvious method of doing this, is by the punishment or destruction of the offenders: That as God hates not the persons of sinners, but only would preserve the honour of his laws, therefore when that is vindicated, his wrath is appeased: Lastly, that by our Saviour's suffering death, on our behalf, and in our stead, he has vindicated God's honour, and, by establishing a new covenant of grace and mercy, has secured, for all who truly repent and amend, pardon and remission of sin, consistent with the honour of the divine laws: From what has been said, I shall make a few useful and practical inferences. And,

First, from the doctrines thus explained, we may learn the true nature of Christ's satisfaction; namely, that his death was truly and properly an expiatory sacrifice. For, if sinners by despising the honour and authority of God's laws, became liable to God's justice and vengeance; if the son of God in our nature, hath obtained the remission of our sins, by the shedding of his blood, which is the *price of our redemption**; then is God's wrath appeased by his death, he accepting the sufferings of his Son, instead of the punishments due to the sinner, in his

* 1 Cor. 6. 20.

his own person ; which is the true notion of an expiatory sacrifice. Wherefore, to say, that Christ died for our advantage, but not in our stead ; not as a sacrifice for sin, but only as a testimony to his doctrine, and an example to encourage us to suffer cheerfully for the will of God, is to diminish from the grace and mercy of God, and from the exceeding love of our Saviour to mankind ; which the apostle chiefly extols, from the consideration of his dying for us, his enemies, and in our *stead*. The death of Christ, was, no doubt, a great testimony to the truth of his doctrine, also an example of great encouragement for others, to suffer patiently for well doing, as the apostle says ; it being better, if the will of God be so, that we suffer for well doing than for evil doing ; for Christ also once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust. But tho' this was one part, yet certainly the main design of his appearing in the flesh, the great and principal end for our Saviour's dying, was the making an expiation for the sins of mankind. This the scriptures are very express in ; our Saviour is said, to have obtained redemption for us ; to have put away sin, by the sacrifice of himself ; to be the propiation of our sins ; and to have given his life a ransom for many †. That is, for so *many* as should believe and obey him. But there is no ground to imagine, as some do, that Christ died only for a certain determinate number of particular persons ; it being evident, that what is affirmed in some places of scripture, of Christ's having died for many, is of the same import with what is said, of his dying for all. The meaning is, for *all* such only, or for so *many* only, as should believe, repent, and obey.

As to the justice of God, in laying the punishment of sinners upon an innocent person, and in forgiving the sins of one person, on account of the merits

† Heb. 9. 12. 26. 1 John 2. 2. Mat. 20. 28.

merits of another, which some think not to be reconciled with justice and equity ; there is this to be replied in general : That God, as supreme Lord of all things, has an absolute, just right, to remit offences committed against himself, upon what condition he pleases. For the obligation to punishment, is not like that of reward, where a person has a right to receive it ; but only a right in the lawgiver to inflict what, being entirely his own, he may remit as much as he pleases, and upon his own terms : And then in particular, as to the justice of laying the punishment of sinners upon an innocent person ; this difficulty is entirely removed, by the persons voluntarily taking the punishment upon himself. For, tho' it be evidently unjust, to punish the innocent instead of the guilty ; yet it is not so, where an innocent person voluntarily undertakes it ; on the contrary, to find out such an expedient, is an instance of the greatest goodness and mercy ; and as the love of Christ is inexpressible, in condescending thus to assume our nature, and submit to the ignominious *death of the cross* ; so the mercy and goodness of God, can never be sufficiently acknowledged in accepting this sacrifice, and for so loving the world, as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life !

Secondly, from hence we may learn the weakness and insufficiency of all other sacrifices and satisfactions. When the honour of God's laws had been diminished, it was reasonable and necessary, that the authority of them should be vindicated ; and either, that the sinner should perish, or some other satisfaction be made in his stead : But then it was also necessary, that expiation should be made by such a person, whose innocence and dignity might render his sufferings acceptable to God, in the stead of the punishment due to mankind ; so as the sinner

might

might be forgiven, consistent with the honour of his laws, and his irreconcileable hatred against sin. For tho' God did accept of beasts offered in sacrifice, from the Jews, as an atonement for their sins; yet these sacrifices had no real efficacy in themselves, to expiate sin, but only as they typified that great sacrifice, which was once to be offered, for the sins of the whole world: And if this be the case, of these propitiations and sacrifices of God's appointing; how much more useless and insignificant, nay deceitful and destructive to the souls of men, must be those vain satisfactions of human invention, those penances and pilgrimages, those empty forms and pomps of devotion in the church of *Rome*; which, instead of being any real satisfaction for past sins, tend to withdraw mens minds from a true spirit of piety, and the practice of real virtue and holiness, and rather to provoke than appease the wrath of God? and as to the repeating of the great sacrifice of the death of Christ, which that church pretends to do daily, in their sacrifice of the mass; this is a thing impossible: For Christ "does not offer himself often, as the high-priest entered into the holy place every year, with blood of others (for then he must have often suffered)." But now once in the end of the world, hath he appeared to put away sin, by the sacrifice of himself; having, by one offering, perfected for ever, them that are sanctified; and once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust *. There is therefore but *one* sacrifice that can truly and effectually expiate sin, which is the death of Christ.

Thirdly, the doctrines thus explained, should teach us to have a deep sense of the wonderful mercy and goodness of God, in designing and appointing the redemption of mankind. When the authority and honour of God's laws were trampled

* Heb. 9. 25. 10. 14.

on and diminished by sin, it was not consistent with the infinite wisdom of the supreme governor of all things, to remit the punishment due to sinful man, without some greater satisfaction than man could possibly make: But that the only begotten Son of God, who was perfectly happy in the bosom of his Father, should voluntarily condescend to assume our frail nature, to be clothed with misery and mortality; that he should leave the glorious majesty of heaven; and from being in the form of God, and most high in the glory of his Father, should stoop down to the earth, and submit to such cruel sufferings, to a death so ignominious, for the redemption of rebellious and apostate men; this is such an instance of goodness and tender mercy, as we can never embrace and entertain with sufficient joy and thankfulness. “ O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out !”

Fourthly, from hence appears the absolute necessity of our own reformation, to make us partakers of this mercy. God, in this very dispensation of pardon and mercy, hath testified a more irreconcileable hatred against sin, than if he had immediately punished it, by the destruction of the sinner. For if God, when he was about to display the infinite abundance of his mercy, in the forgiveness of sin, would not accept of any smaller ransom, than the blood of his only begotten son; what hope can any man, who continues in sin, have, that he shall escape the vengeance of God? If such terrible afflictions fell upon the beloved son of God, for the sins of others; what dreadful vengeance must we expect, if, by neglecting this great salvation, we receive the punishment of our own offences? For however consistent it may be with justice, to permit an innocent person, freely and voluntarily to lay

down

down his life as a ransom for another ; yet it is such a stupendous instance of love and mercy, as should raise in us an eternal dread and horror of sin, the forgiveness of which was purchased upon such difficult terms ; and which forgiveness if we despise, by returning again to our sins, crucifying to ourselves the Son of God afresh, putting him to an open shame, and doing despite unto the spirit of grace : Then the apostle assures us, that our God, even the Father of mercies, “ is a consuming fire, that there remains no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. That our Lord shall come in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not his gospel ; who shall be destroyed with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his majesty ; when the wicked shall cry to the mountains to cover them, and to the hills to fall on them, and hide them from the wrath of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.” The wrath of the Lamb is very emphatical, signifying that our Redeemer himself, who loved and gave himself for us, will yet finally have no pity on the impenitent. The very forgiveness purchased by Christ, is not obtained for those who continue in sin, but for those only who forsake it : Wherefore, unless we reform our lives, and renounce all sin, perfecting holiness in the fear of God, we have no part in the death and passion of Christ. Not even this infinite fountain of mercy, the *sufferings and blood of Christ*, will do us any kindness ; but will, on the contrary, inflame our guilt and increase our condemnation. O that all those would seriously consider this, who take no care to obey God’s commandments, but hope to have their sins pardoned thro’ Christ’s merits, and yet *continue in sin*,

that grace may abound. How unreasonable is it, for any to think of sinning the more safely, because Christ hath made atonement for past sins; when for that very reason we ought the more carefully to avoid sin, lest a worse thing come unto us, and there remain no more sacrifice for sin.

Lastly, from what has been said, we may learn the necessity of the destruction of the incorrigible, to vindicate the authority of God's laws. By this last dispensation of the gospel, God has done all that was consistent with the wisdom of his government, and gone further than some can think reconcileable with his justice and goodness, in punishing an innocent person for our offences, that we might obtain pardon and forgiveness. If then, we still continue incorrigible, after this last means which God has used for our recovery, there is no other remedy, but we must fall into perdition. If we neglect this last and great salvation, we shall fall into the same deplorable state that the children of *Israel* did; which seems to be a type of the christian apostacy. They went, "after all the abominations of the heathen, "and polluted the house of the Lord which he had "hallowed in *Jerusalem*; and the Lord God of "their fathers sent to them by his messengers; "because he had compassion upon his people, and "upon his dwelling place: But they mocked the "messengers of God, and despised his words and "misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord "arose against his people, till there was no remedy; therefore he brought upon them the king of "the *Chaldees*, who slew their young men with the "sword, in the house of their sanctuary, and had "no compassion upon young man or maiden, old "man, or him that stooped for age: he gave them "all into his hand*." Even thus we, if notwithstanding the clear knowledge of the truth, which

God

* 2 Chron. 36. 15, &c.

God has revealed to us by his Son, and repeated by his ministers, we still continue to sin wilfully; there can be no remedy: There remains no more sacrifice for sin, but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversary. Wherefore, while this short space of life lasteth, and God graciously affords us time to repent; let us resolve by an immediate and thorough reformation to avoid the wrath to come, before our feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and the things that belong to our peace, be for ever hid from our eyes.

DISCOURSE XX. Bp. Pearson.

On the Creed, called the Apostles:

John 14. 1.

Ye believe in God, believe also in me.

TO believe the creed, is to assent to every article and proposition thereof, as a collection of necessary points of faith, delivered in the writings of the blessed apostles and prophets, immediately moved and inspired by God. And to say *I believe*, is to make open confession of this faith; for as with the heart *man believeth unto righteousness*; so with the mouth *confession is made unto salvation**. And we are obliged to believe and acknowledge the christian faith, both in regard to truth, which ought to be declared and published, and by virtue of the apostle's precept, to be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the

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hope

* Rom. 10. 9.

*hope that is in you**. The church therefore hath wisely required, that this profession should be made by every one at baptism; for which purpose it was ordered to be explained to the catechumens before *Easter* (the solemn time for the admission of baptism) and the clergy were enjoined to inculcate it frequently in their discourses to the people. And as every one in particular must believe these things, in order to his salvation, it is proper that each person should make a particular profession thereof for himself; and as to the word *I believe*, it extends to every particular and distinct truth, affirmed and acknowledged in each article, and ought to be so applied by every one that repeats this creed. For instance; I believe in God the father almighty; I believe in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord; I believe in the Holy Ghost; and the same as to every other article. And tho' the things a man believes are not apparent to his senses, nor evident to his understanding; yet since they are contained in the holy scriptures, which were written by the prophets and apostles, who, by a miraculous power, proved they were inspired by the Holy Ghost; and that what they delivered was the word of God, whose infinite knowledge cannot be deceived, and whose holiness and justice will not permit him to deceive; therefore these things are to be assented to and relied upon, and we must believe them to be infallibly true and certain. The first article of the creed is,

I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth. We are first to acknowledge the being of God, by whose authority and testimony we believe the whole christian faith, because the truths of divine faith are attested by God. And when once we truly apprehend the right notion of God, and the reasons upon which we believe there is such

* Mat. 10. 32.

a being, as also the unity of that being, and why he is but one; we shall then be sufficiently instructed in the full signification of this phrase; *I believe in God*.—The being of God the creator, may be proved from his creatures; for by the greatness and beauty of the creatures, the maker of them is seen*. And the *invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood, by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead* †.

We find by experience that some things had a beginning, and therefore some thing must be, which had no beginning; because nothing can be a beginning to itself; for every thing must have been either made or not made. If some things were made, then there must be a being which was never made. It would be a contradiction to suppose any thing made itself, which would be to exist, and be produced, at one and the same time. Whatever thing produces another, must itself have a cause; and since an infinite succession of causes and effects is absurd, we must at last come to an eternal independent being. This further appears, in that every being is made for some end, and directed thereto in its several operations; which proves infinite wisdom to be in a first cause, that designs and produces all things, presiding over and directing them to proper ends, tho' not perceived by themselves.—The universal consent of all nations, in all ages of the world, is another strong proof of the reasonableness and truth of this fact, that there is a God. Nay, he has convinced us of his being, by certain and infallible predictions of future events, and many wonderful miracles wrought by him. We have heard with our ears, O God, and our fathers have told us, what noble works thou didst in their days, in the times of old ||.—Every man's conscience also

O 3 gives

* *Wisd. 13, 5.* † *Rom. 1. 20.* || *Psal. 44. 3.*

gives testimony to the being of God; it either accuses and terrifies him with the apprehension of punishment for his evil actions; or excuses, and fills him with hopes of reward for his virtue. Indeed, there can be no divine faith, without believing there is a God; faith is therefore divine, because it relies on the testimony and authority of God. But that which has no being, can have no authority, no testimony. His veracity, which is the foundation of his authority, is grounded on his omniscience and holiness, and these suppose his existence; for that which is not, cannot be knowing or holy; and we must believe God to be of infinite perfection, to render him worthy of our worship and adoration.

The being of God has been so universally received, that men have been more apt to multiply the deity, and fall into idolatry, than to deny him. We are therefore not only to believe in a God, against atheism, but also, that there is but *one* God, in opposition to polytheism. The being and unity of God, have a necessary dependance upon, and connexion with each other; *for there is no other God, but one**. And this may be proved from the nature of God; for as he is the first and final cause on whom all things depend, there can be but *one*, and not two independent beings. *I am the first and the last, and besides me there is no God*†; and God is so *one*, as to exclude all others. Singularity is essential to him, and there can be none besides him. *He is the only true God*‡. To believe the unity of God is necessary, that we may not doubt, or be uncertain of the object we ought to worship; so as to offend God, by giving to another, what only belongs to him. *Thou shalt worship the lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve*||.

After.

* 1 Cor. 8. 4. † Isai. 44. 6. ‡ John 17. 3.
|| Mat. 4. 10.

After confessing God's being and unity, we acknowledge him to be a father, *there is but one God, the father of all* †. The title Father is applied to God, in respect of his creating and producing all things, in particular mankind; for redeeming us from eternal misery; and for adopting us as his children. But he is in a peculiar manner to be owned as a Father, in respect to a particular person mentioned in the next article of the creed, who is his *first born, his beloved, and only begotten son*. And in this sense only, the antient fathers explain this article. Therefore as the Father in this article, is considered personally, as the Father of the Son, so Christ may be considered as the Son of God, several ways; as being begotten of the Holy Ghost, of the virgin *Mary* ‡; as he was raised from the dead, by the power of his father, and made heir of all things*; but more especially, as he is of the same divine nature, and the eternal son of the eternal father; God of God, and God with God. Let us then carefully reflect upon the eminence that belongs to this relation, and ascribe to God the priority he is entitled to, which consists in this, that the father hath his essence of himself, the son by communication from the father. As the *father bath life in himself, so bath he given to the son, to have life in himself* †. It was most suitable, that the son should be sent by the authority of the father, because it would have been inconsistent for the father to have been sent. The father therefore is first in order, mentioned in our rule of faith, and public confession; as founded in nature, and resulting from his paternity. But when we say the father is of himself, the meaning is, that he proceeds from none, but eternally existed, without receiving his subsistence from any other person. For which reason the name of God, taken abso-

O 4 lately

[†] 1 Cor. 8. 6. Ephes. 4. 6. [‡] Luke 1. 35.

* Acts 13. 33. + John 5. 26.

lutely in scripture, is always spoken of the father ; as the *one God, the only true God, the God and father of our lord Jesus Christ* *.

As then every Christian is to believe there is a God, and no more than *one*, so he is to confess that God is the father of angels and men, and all things ; that he is also a father of mankind by regenerating, adopting, and crowning them with an everlasting reward ; that in a more eminent and transcendent manner, he is the father of his only begotten son, by his conception of the virgin *Mary* ; by investing him with royal authority ; by raising him from the dead, and constituting him heir of all things ; but antecedently to this, by eternal generation : by reason of which he was always a father, and has a priority and pre-eminence, as to the foundation of the son and spirit, who are of him. Having thus considered God as the father, we proceed to his omnipotence.

The word *almighty* in the original, signifies, God's dominion over all ; and this consists in the right of making, disposing and ordering all things according to his will and pleasure. His dominion, is independent and infinite, universal and everlasting. He is supreme *God of God*. *He is Lord of heaven and earth* †. *He is the king eternal ; whose dominion endureth throughout all generations*. God, by right of dominion uses all things as his own, and he disposes of them ultimately for the manifestation of his glory ; *to him, and for him, are all things*. And our belief of this is necessary, to produce in us reverence to his majesty, and subjection to his will ; to make us patient in afflictions, and resigned to his dispensations ; and sufficiently sensible, how much we are indebted to him for the benefits we enjoy.

And

* 1 Cor. 8. 6. 1 Thes. 1. 9. John 17. 3. Ephes. 1. 3. † Deut. 10. 17. Mat. 11. 25. 1 Tim. 1. 17.

And this leads me to consider God the father almighty, as

Maker of heaven and earth. By heaven and earth, is meant the whole world, or universe, all things visible and invisible. *The lord made heaven and earth, the sea, the world, and all tbings therein.* The most exquisite materials, the most bright and glorious habitations, together with the most excellent beings to whom they were assigned, are the works of his hands; much more the inferior and lesser parts of the world. But tho' God created all things in heaven and earth, yet all were not made after the same manner; angels and immaterial substances, together with the heavens and the elements of earth, water and air, were by immediate creation. *In the beginning God created the heaven and earth.* But all vegetables, the beasts of the fields, the fowls of the air, the fishes of the sea, and the body of man, were formed out of things that were before made. *Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit-tree fruit, after his kind. Let the waters bring forth abundantly, the moving creatures that hath life, and fowl that may fly. Out of the ground, God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and formed man of the dust of the ground.* * In the creation God was the cause or agent; his goodness moved him, his will freely concurred thereto, and his power enabled him to perform it. God's power is so wonderful, that with him, to will is to effect; and to determine is to perform. God said, let there be light, and there was light. We have all imaginable reason to believe, the world was created in the manner and at the time delivered to us by Moses. And that the father made the world, we have the confession of the whole church at *Jerusalem.* Lord,

O 5

thou

* Exod. 20. 11. Gen. 1. 11, 20.

thou art God, which hast made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is || ; and yet 'tis also affirmed in scripture, that all things were made by the Son, and produced by the spirit. But the reasons why the creed so peculiarly ascribes the work of creation to the father, are first to refute those heretics who owned another creator, besides the God and father of our lord Jesus Christ ; and secondly, to establish the paternal preheminence, as he is the first person of the trinity. Our Saviour acknowledges his father to be primarily, *lord of heaven and earth* ; and that *the son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the father do.* In this sense the church ever professed to believe in God the father, creator of heaven and earth.

It is necessary for us thus to believe of God, because it tends to his glory, which is illustrated in the creation ; and that we should celebrate his power, wisdom, and goodness. *O lord, how manifold are thy works, in wisdom hast thou made them all; thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.* 2ly, to possess us with a spirit of ready obedience, and an aversion to all iniquity. When a man is persuaded, that God's hands have made and fashioned him, he will with *David*, beg understanding, that he may keep his commandments ; and abhor the thoughts of offending him, when he considers, that all creatures fulfil his orders, but the devil and wicked men, who only of the whole creation, are disobedient to his word. It is also necessary, in order to comfort and sustain us in all conditions of life. He cannot but esteem himself happy, whose hope is in the lord ; because his power and ability cannot fail. He can secure and protect us, and is always inclined to preserve and bless us. Every christian must then be persuaded,

persuaded, that heaven and earth, and all things had a beginning, and were produced by God. And this by a free act of his will, moved thereto by his own goodness, at the time his infinite wisdom had determined, and most probably within six or seven thousand years. Thus must we believe in God the father almighty, maker of heaven and earth ; I now proceed to consider, the second article of the creed.

And in Jesus Christ, his only son our lord. Our Saviour is here described by his name, *Jesus Christ*; by his generation, the only son of God ; and by his dominion our lord. *Jesus* is his most proper name, (for *Christ* refers to his office) and signifies a saviour ; *Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins* †. Christ is a saviour, both as he declared the only way by which eternal salvation is to be obtained, and as he procured and wrought salvation for us. God sent his son into the world, that the world thro' him might be saved. He gave himself a ransom for all. He is also a saviour, as he actually confers salvation upon his servants, mediates and interceeds for them. He is able to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. As to the title of our Saviour's office, Christ and Messiah are of the same signification, and both mean anointed ; the latter is the *Hebrew* name, the other the *Greek*, which we in *English* retain.

But it may be proper briefly to enquire, what reasons the *Jews* had to expect a Messiah ; as also to prove that *HE* is come, and that *Jesus* is the Messiah — It evidently appears that the *Jews* expected such a Christ. *All men mused in their hearts of John, whether he was the Christ or not.* || ; and

O 6

they

† Mat. 1. 21. || Luke 3. 15.

they sent priests and levites from Jerusalem, to ask him, when Christ cometh 4. The grounds of their expectations, were from many promises of scripture. *The lord thy God will raise up unto thee, a prophet, from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me, Messiah the prince **. — That the Messiah is come, we need only examine when these promises were to be fulfilled. *The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a law-giver from between his feet, until Shiloh come, and unto him shall the gathering of the people be †.* The sceptre is departed from Judah, and therefore Shiloh is certainly come; by whom the ancient Jews understood the Messiah.

That Jesus is the Messiah appears in these particulars, That all the prophecies concerning the Messiah, were fulfilled in him. He was of the tribe of Judah, of the house of David, and born in Bethlehem, as predicted of him. He taught, did, and suffered all that was foretold of the Messiah. He revealed to us the most perfect will of God, with great plainness and perspicuity; and as a sufficient testimony of his divine mission, he wrought more miracles than Moses and all the prophets; and conferred the same power upon his disciples. *I give unto you power, in my name shall they cast out devils. He that believeth on me, the work, that I do, shall be also do ‡.* His sufferings also demonstrate him to be the Messiah, in respect to his ill treatment, cruel death, and passion. According to Isaiah's prophecy, “ He was despised and rejected of men, and they esteemed him not. He made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant; he had not where to lay his head; he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; they pierced his hands and feet ||.” After his death all things were fulfilled, that were spoken of him.

4 John 1. 19. * Acts 3. 22. † Gen. 49. 10.
‡ Mark 16. 17. John 14. 12. || Isai. 53. 2. Psal. 22. 16.

him. He made his grave with the rich, being buried by *Joseph of Arimathea* in his sepulchre, and was raised the third day ; he ascended into heaven, and was placed at the right hand of God, that all the house of *Israel* might assuredly know, that God hath made *Jesus*, whom they crucified, both lord and Christ †. Again,

The propagation of the Gospel throughout the world, proves Jesus to be the Messiah. *All kings shall fall down before him, all nations shall serve him. My name shall be great among the Gentiles.* This came to pass by the preaching of the gospel, which was first done to the house of *Israel*, and then to all nations ; and many thousands both of Jews and Gentiles believed.

And Christ was anointed to those offices, to which persons among the Jews used to be anointed ; namely, king, priest, and prophet. As our redemption was to be completed, by freeing us from the guilt and power of sin, putting us in a state of righteousness, and granting us eternal life ; therefore he must be a priest to offer a propitiatory sacrifice, a prophet to reveal God's will, and convert us to righteousness, and a king to have power and authority to translate us from death to life eternal. And if we believe him our redeemer and Christ, we must acknowledge that he exercised these three offices, in a most eminent degree ; because he could not be our Saviour unless he was also Christ. He could not reveal the way of salvation, except he was a prophet ; nor procure salvation, unless he was a priest ; nor confer it, except he was a king : and he could not be all these, except he was Christ. It was testified to the Jews that *Jesus was Christ, and whoso ever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God* ||.

After

† *Acts 2. 36. || 18. 5.*

After acknowledging our Saviour to be Christ, we must confess him to be the son of God. St. John wrote his gospel, that we might believe that *Jesus is the Christ, the son of God**. And he is the son of God, as being conceived by the Holy Ghost; as being consecrated to so high an office, by the will of God, who *sanctified and sent him into the world* †; and as being raised by God from the dead. He was declared to be the son of God, with power, by the resurrection from the dead.

But he is in a more proper manner *the only begotten son of God*. Jesus Christ had a being and subsistence, not created but divine, before he was conceived by the virgin *Mary*; which he received by communication from the father, and was a proper generation. The divine essence was so communicated to Christ, that he is most properly and perfectly *the only begotten son of the father*. And that Christ had a being, before he was conceived by the virgin *Mary*, is evident, because he was in heaven, and descended from thence. *I came down from heaven, I came forth from the father, and am come into the world* ‡; again, *I leave the world and go to the father*. He says himself, *before Abraham was, I am. He made the world*, and therefore had a being at the beginning of it. *In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God*; all things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made †. Christ the word, who was made flesh, was in the beginning before all worlds, and all things were made by him; so that his being was not created, but essentially diyine. This appears from his creating all things, for *he that built all things is God*. Besides, he who was equal with God, must be truly and essentially God, who being, as the apostle says, *in the form of God, thought it*

* John 20. 31. † John 10. 36. ‡ John 16. 27, 28.

† John. 1. 2. 3.

it no robbery to be equal with God ; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant †. Christ being in the form of God before he was in the form of a servant, or made man, proves that he did as really and truly subsist in the divine nature, as in the nature of man ; for as the form of God, in which he subsisted, was the divine nature, he must therefore be equal with God ; since nothing can be equal with God, which is not the divine nature itself. So that he who was the word and with God, in the beginning, and was God ; who was in the form of God and equal with God, before he became man, had a being before he was conceived by the virgin *Mary* ; which was the one, eternal, divine essence, really and truly God.

That Christ received this divine essence by communication from the father, we are now briefly to evince. There can be but one essence properly divine, and but one person originally subsisting therein ; because a plurality of persons *originally* and *independently subsisting*, would infer a multiplicity of Gods. The Father is originally God, and therefore Jesus Christ, who is not the father, and yet truly and properly the eternal God, must have the godhead communicated by the father, who is not only eternally, but originally God. *As the father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the son, to have life in himself* *. Tho' the son be equal with God, yet can he do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the father do || ; so that in the equality there is a difference, and priority, for Christ confessed, *my father is greater than I*. The son is *equal* in nature, the father is greater, as communicating the divine nature to Christ, who is therefore of the same *substance* with the father ; hence it is, that this is a proper generation. He who communicates the essence is a proper father, and he to whom it was communicated, is a proper son ; by which

† Phil. 2. 6, 7. * John 5. 26. || John 14. 28.

which Christ became the eternal son of God. *He is the son of the living God*; his own, true, and proper son*. He is also the *only begotten* son of God. None besides him, had the divine nature communicated in so peculiar a manner, as to be the *only begotten* son of God. The same essence is indeed communicated to the Holy Ghost; but there is this difference, that the son is begotten, and the Holy Ghost proceedeth; and tho' every thing which is begotten, proceedeth, yet every thing that proceedeth is not begotten. Every christian therefore must be assured of this certain and necessary truth, that Jesus Christ the saviour and messiah, is the true, proper, and natural son of God, begotten of the same substance with the father; so fully communicated to him, that he is of the same essence, *God of God, light of light, very God of very God.*

And we must believe that Jesus Christ is *our lord*; because he is heir of all things. The word Lord in scripture has many significations; but as two natures are united in Christ's person, he is lord in respect of both; one kind of his dominion is inherent in his divinity, the other was bestowed upon his humanity. As the word by whom all things were made, he is lord of his creatures; in this sense, Thomas confessed him, *his lord and his God*. But he was also made *both Lord and Christ* †. This dominion was imparted to his human nature; *the father hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the son of man; and he shall reward every man according to his work*. Christ indeed is *Lord of all*; the father and the spirit only excepted. The angels worship him, and all nations are his inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth are his possession. But he is peculiarly our lord, as we are christians; not only as he made and preserves us, but as he redeemed us: he having triumphed over the enemies

to

* Mat. 16. 16. Rom. 8. 32. † Acts 2. 35.

to whom we were in bondage, taken us into his protection, and bought us with no less a price than that of his own blood. He is also our lord; as he bestows upon us temporal and spiritual blessings in this life, and has prepared for us mansions of glory, in the life to come.

Let us then demonstrate by an holy conversation, that we believe in Jesus Christ, and that *he* the *Messiah* is come. Let us by love and unanimity, brotherly kindness and charity, convince others that we are the subjects of this kingdom, wherein the wolf was to dwell with the lamb, and the leopard with the calf, and the young lion, and a little child to lead them *. Hatred and variance, heresies and schisms, fraud and violence, rapine and bloodshed, superstition and idolatry are inconsistent with the kingdom of the Messiah ? and whoever are guilty of such impieties, by their actions deny that he is come, or that Jesus is *HE*. But if we will receive him in his several offices, we must hear him as our *prophet*, place our confidence in him as our *high-priest*, and pay a true allegiance to him as our *king*, hoping for an eternal reward in his kingdom of glory.

To believe that Jesus Christ is *the only begotten son of God*, is necessary to confirm our faith, with respect to the redemption of mankind ; and that we may be convinced of the excellency and dignity of his person, of the efficacy and value of his sufferings : that we are bought with a price, and redeemed with the precious blood of Christ † ; also to encourage our worshipping of him. We are commanded *to honour the son, as we honour the father* ‡. But unless we believe him to be the only begotten son of God, of the same substance with the father, it would be difficult to reconcile this duty with other commands, which requires us to fear and worship

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* Isai. 11. 6. † 1 Cor. 6. 20. ‡ John 5. 23.

the lord our God, and to serve him only *. To worship any being as God, knowing him not to be God, is gross *idolatry*; to worship any one as God, that is not so, tho' we esteem him so to be, is the same sin, in a less degree; and to worship one that is God, whom we do not believe to be so, would involve us in the guilt of formal idolatry, tho' worship was really due to him: And therefore to avoid such an abominable sin, we must believe the son to be God, whom we are bound to worship and serve. Again, to believe that Jesus Christ is the only son of God, is necessary, in order to possess us with the most grateful sense of God's infinite love, in sending his son to save us. God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son. He spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all. He sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins †. And it is also necessary to believe that Jesus Christ is *our lord*, that we may daily reflect upon our condition of servants; to remember, that we are not our own, but are bought with a price; that so we may not live to ourselves, but unto the lord. To make us consider, that they who govern their fellow-servants upon earth, should take care to rule with justice and mercy; to avoid all tyranny and oppression, to esteem their authority as a charge and trust, knowing that they also have a *master in heaven*; and therefore to govern them according to his laws; and that subjects may learn to obey, and thereby express their duty to the lord of all.

Lastly, that we may receive comfort and encouragement in all circumstances and upon all occurrences; being convinced that he is able to dispose all things to our greatest advantage, and that he will not fail to support his faithful servants. They who dedicate themselves to him, have many enemies, who are also his; but he will tread them under

* Deut. 6. 13. † John 3. 16.

der his feet. The influence of their lusts is great, but his grace is sufficient for them. The afflictions they may endure for his sake, are perhaps heavy, but he knoweth how to deliver them; or if they suffer with him, they also shall reign with him, who is the *lord of lords.*

Every christian therefore, in this article, must assent to this infallible truth, that Jesus Christ, the only son of God, is an eternal being, on which all other things depend; that as God, he hath the absolute, supreme, and universal dominion over all things; and that as *Son of man*, he was invested with all power to complete our redemption, to destroy his and our enemies; that tho' he be lord by right of creation and preservation; yet he is more peculiarly the lord of those who believe him to be their saviour and redeemer. Thus will every Christian believe in Jesus Christ our Lord.

D I S C O U R S E XXII. Bp. Pearson.

Who was conceived.

Mat. I. 20.

— That which was conceived in her, is of the Holy Ghost.

TH E person which, in a former discourse, we proved to be the only Son of God, and of the same substance with the Father, *was conceived and born in the fulness of time.* By his being conceived and born, is meant whatever concurred to

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the production of our Saviour's human nature, when he became incarnate, and was *made flesh*. This was by joining the human nature with the divine. Neither the Father nor the Holy Ghost was made man or suffered, was conceived or born, but only the Son ; who became truly man. The mediator between God and men, is the man Christ Jesus ; who had a true nativity, and assumed both a body and soul. A body was prepared for him ; and the actions and passions of his life demonstrate, that he had the nature of flesh, for he was nourished by proper food, and grew up by degrees ; he came *eating and drinking*, and had the natural appetites, tenderness, and frailty of his flesh. “ Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God ; and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God.” Christ had a human body, and an human soul. He increased in wisdom, and the faculties of his soul were improved ; but his infinite understanding could not be enlarged. He had a will in his human nature, distinct from his father's. His soul was *exceeding sorrowful, even unto death*. When death dissolved the vital union, the soul was separated from the body and returned to God who gave it. Thus he became perfect God and perfect man, for both natures were preserved entire and distinct. They were not mixed and confounded, nor was one converted into the other. God cannot be made, and therefore could not become man ; the immaterial, immortal nature, could not be changed into a finite, corruptible substance ; as impossible is it, that the human nature should become divine, or be turned into the godhead. It is not said, the flesh was the word, but the word was *made flesh*. One Christ then subsisted in two natures, and the union was made, not in the natures, but in his person

† 1 John 4. 2, 3.

person only. This is a certain and necessary truth, which if we do not embrace, we make two Christs and two mediators. Christ had different nativities in his different natures; he was both born from eternity, and yet conceived and born in time.

Christ was *conceived by the Holy Ghost*. It was not in the power of the virgin to conceive, but God by an immediate miracle caused her conception. The Holy Ghost came upon her, and the power of the highest overshadowed her; so that which was conceived in her was of the Holy Ghost*. And yet the Holy Ghost did not conceive Christ, but the virgin; nor was he made of the substance of the Holy Ghost, whose essence could not be made. We must therefore assent to this truth, that the eternal Son of the Father, God of God, was conceived and born, and made man. That his human nature consisted of soul and body, and was joined with the divine in the unity of his person. That he was made flesh, and conceived in the womb, after the manner of men; not by the way of human propagation, but by the invisible and miraculous operation of the Holy Ghost, which enabled a virgin to conceive and bring forth Jesus Christ our Lord: He being

Born of the virgin Mary. The Messiah was to be born of a virgin; *behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel* †. And she was a virgin, espoused to a man whose name was Joseph; but she knew him not. And in all probability he abstained from all conjugal familiarity with her, that she might remain immaculate, out of reverence to her divine son; and therefore she has been honoured with the title of *ever virgin*, by the Latins as well as Greeks. The virgin having thus conceived by the Holy Ghost, our Saviour's body was formed of her substance, and she brought him forth.

* Luke 1, 35. Mat. 10. 10. † Isai. 7. 14.

forth. But tho' we may honour and esteem her according to her high dignity ; yet we must not be guilty of idolatry in worshipping and adoring her. It is therefore necessary for all christians to believe, that a woman called *Mary*, who was a pure virgin, conceived in her womb the only begotten Son of God, by the operation of the Holy Ghost, and, at the usual time, brought forth this her son : Who

Suffered under Pontius Pilate. In these words are asserted Christ's sufferings, and under whose government he suffered. The person who suffered was our Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God. We believe the Messiah was to suffer, and that Jesus, whom we call Christ, did suffer, whatever had been determined and foretold concerning him. *Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer many things* ||. The iniquity of us all could be laid on none but a redeemer ; the chastisement of our peace could be upon none but the Messiah ; and we could be healed only with his stripes, who bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows. And that our Lord Jesus Christ did actually suffer, is confessed by his very enemies. The Gentiles acknowledged it, the Jews triumphed in it, and reproached his disciples with it. He suffered hunger and thirst, revilings and contempt, sorrows and agonies, stripes and buffetings, condemnation and crucifixion ; the infirmities of our nature, the weight of our sins, and the malice of men and the devil, also concurred in his sufferings ; and the wisdom of God ordained and permitted all this. And these sufferings were foretold, both as to the measure and manner of them ; being the result of an express agreement, between God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, thereby to accomplish our redemption. What he was to suffer, was propounded in making his soul an offering for sin ; what he was to undertake was to do

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|| Luke 24. 26. 46.

God's will. These sufferings being thus determined and agreed upon, were revealed by the Spirit to the prophets, and by them delivered to his people; and the blessed Jesus truly suffered whatever had been determined and foretold. Every type was fulfilled in him. Every circumstance of his passion which had been revealed, exactly came to pass. He bore all that grief and sorrow which was pre-ordained, of which he admonished his disciples beforehand, that they might observe when they came to pass, and might believe. *For all things that are written by the prophets, concerning the son of man, shall be accomplished* ‡.

It was the eternal Son of God, very God of very God, who suffered. *The princes of this world, crucified the Lord of glory**. The word which was with God, and was God, being made flesh, did suffer in his human nature; and yet he was still the same person. When he fasted, was hungry and thirsty; when he was buffeted and scourged, crucified and died, it was no other person but the son of God, of the same nature with the father. So that as to his office, he was the Messiah, but in respect of his person, he was the son of God. But when we say the son of God suffered, we do not mean his divine nature, for then the father and spirit must have suffered also; but that the son suffered in the human nature only. The soul and body of our Saviour were the proper subject of his passion; in these his humanity consisted, and in these he suffered. *Christ suffered for us in the flesh* †. The deity could not be changed in its essential perfections. If it be asked, how could God suffer, when we assert the Godhead did not suffer; we answer, the intimate union of the divine and human nature, in the person of the Son, will justify our giving the same attributes to both; for since the same individual person

‡ Luk. 18. 31. * 1 Cor. 2. 8. † 1 Pet. 4. 1.

son is both God and man, we may truly say that God is man, and man is God. For the properties of both natures may be attributed to the son ; not that the divinity of Christ was passable and mortal, nor his humanity omnipotent or omnipresent. He was mortal as man, and eternal as God ; his sufferings were of his mortal nature, not of his deity ; and yet the son of God truly suffered. The one nature was subject to infirmity, the other incapable of suffering.

Our Saviour suffered both in body and soul. As he assumed a real body that was frail and mortal, he felt weariness, hunger, and thirst ; he was liable to outward injuries, and equally sensible of pain and torture, with that of others. With respect to his soul, that was subject to animal passions ; it was tormented with fear, upon the apprehensions of future evils, and when they were present, it occasioned sorrow and anguish. *He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. His soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto death*[¶]. And when in his agony, *his sweat was as it were great drops of blood, falling down to the ground*, his terror was inconceivable and beyond expression ; which arose from a full sense of the weight of sin, when *God laid on him the iniquity of us all*. He knew what evil and guilt, what offence and ingratitude was contained in our sins, and what destruction the wrath of God would bring upon mankind for their transgressions ; and therefore he could not but feel inexpressible remorse, when the guilt of many millions of offenders was charged upon him. Justly then might he say, *behold and see, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which was done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger*[†]. And it is necessary we should believe our Saviour suffered, that we may be satisfied he was truly

[¶] Isai. 53. 3. Mat. 26. 37, 38. [†] Lam. 1. 12.

truly man, and thereby capable of redeeming us. The divine essence could not suffer; but it was the mediator between God and man who was grieved, and in an agony, who bled and died. His sufferings were the propitiation for our sins, the remission of which could not be obtained without shedding of blood; and by his death he made satisfaction for them; so that we may depend upon that eternal happiness which he purchased for us by his sufferings. And we may thereby also more firmly confide in his mercy; because as man, he was touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and is therefore naturally inclined to have compassion on us, to forgive our ignorances and errors. Again, from our Saviour's sufferings, we should learn to suffer with humility, patience, and cheerfulness; for if God spared not his own Son, we, his adopted children, must expect to be partakers of the same discipline; and ought to transcribe his example, who was made perfect by sufferings, that we may also reign with him. Every christian therefore, must be persuaded within himself, that the only begotten Son of God, did really and truly suffer for the redemption of mankind, not in his divine, but in his human nature, which, in his state of humiliation, was subject to our infirmities.

The circumstance of time when our Lord suffered, is mentioned to be under the government of *Pontius Pilate*. Tho' Pilate owned his innocence, and remonstrated to the Jews against his condemnation, and was much afraid when our Saviour made himself to be the Son of God; yet for all this he unjustly and impiously condemned him. It was necessary to express in the creed, under whom our Saviour suffered, that we might fix the time of his sufferings in our memories, which the Jews endeavoured to unsettle, that they might deny his passion. It was also proper to mention Pilate's name,

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because he was an unexceptionable evidence both of our Saviour's death and innocence. Every one may from hence be assured, that Christ, the Son of God, suffered for the sins of men, in the time of *Pontius Pilate*, the procurator of *Judea*, at the instigation of the Jews ; and *Pilate*, who had pronounced him innocent, at last condemned and delivered him to be put to death, according to the custom of his own nation, that the prophecies concerning him might be fulfilled. He

Was crucified. We are now come to the most remarkable instance of Christ's passion, his crucifixion, which concluded his sufferings, and occasioned his death. That the Messiah was to be crucified, may be collected from several *types*, and was signified by direct prophecies. To omit others less clear, there are two very express, and not to be eluded ; that of the prophet, *they shall look upon me whom they have pierced* ; and that of the psalmist, *they pierced my bands and my feet**. These plainly refer to the fixing his hands and feet to the cross by nails, and wounding his body with a spear. Accordingly the blessed Jesus was crucified, at the instance of the obdurate Jews, by order of *Pilate*, who gave sentence that it should be, as they required †. Thereupon the soldiers having scourged him, led him away to crucify him ; and he went forth of the city, bearing his cross, until he fainted. And when they came to *Calvary*, they crucified him between two malefactors ; and he underwent those sufferings upon the cross, which had been typified and foretold. It should be observed of this punishment, that it was the most painful and ignominious of any amongst the *Romans*. Those parts which were most nervous and sensible were bored thro' and distended, and the death that ensued was not quick and immediate, but lingering and tormenting ; the sharpness

* Zechar. 12. 10. Psal. 22. 16. † Luk. 23, 24.

sharpness of which tortures was most grievous. This punishment was also most shameful, being only inflicted on slaves and fugitives, or the vilest and most detestable malefactors ; and after their death, their bodies were left on the crosses, as a mark of the utmost infamy and disgrace. It is necessary to believe Christ was crucified, because he was to be made a curse for us by hanging on a tree, thereby to redeem mankind from the original curse under which they lay, while all were concluded under sin ; and that we may testify the power of Christ's crucifixion in ourselves, by our being *crucified with him, that the body of sin may be destroyed* ; that we may *crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts* ; and *glory in his cross*, by which *the world is crucified unto us, and we unto the world* ||. And we should always bear in mind the sharpness of Christ's sufferings, and be duly sensible how extremely painful and afflicting that death was, by which he overcame death ; that so we may be encouraged to suffer patiently for his name sake, who suffered infinitely more on our account. We should also hence learn humility from him, and not repine under the most vile and abject condition that can befall us ; but imitate him, *who endured the cross, despising the shame* ; and should be deterred from apostacy, by which we crucify the Son of God afresh, and become worse than the Jews who really crucified him. So that every christian should be satisfied, that Christ Jesus, in order to take off the curse from us, appeared in the form of a servant ; and by the false accusation of the Jews, and the sentence of Pilate, was condemned to be crucified according to the Roman custom ; the pain of which terrible punishment he endured, being also exposed to scorn and contempt, and all this that we might escape ; and

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therefore let us not be ashamed to own our belief in Christ crucified.

And because crucifixion does not certainly and necessarily include death, since, before he expired, he might be taken down and preserved ; it is therefore said, that he was *dead*, as well as crucified. The Messiah was to die ; *Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures*. He was the lamb slain from the foundation of the world*. Christ our passover was slain. And they who most eagerly thirsted for his blood, were convinced at last of the truth of this. The sun withdrew its light ; the graves opened ; the earth quaked ; the rocks rent ; and the frame of nature shook, to notify the death of the God of nature. All the spectators of this dismal tragedy agreed, that *it was finished*. The merciless soldiers finding him dead, forbore to break his legs. The blood and water, which flowed out of his side, most evidently confirmed that he died by a true and proper death. As life consists in the union of soul and body, and death is the separation of the soul from the body ; so our Saviour's soul was thus separated, and his body deprived of life, sense, and motion. He commanded his spirit into his father's hands, and gave up the ghost †. But tho' he voluntarily laid down his life, he left not the body before his torments compelled him ; and as Christ was God, and that an union of the divine and human nature was in his person, this union was not dissolved by his death. Indeed, so far as the parts of his human nature were separated, as to make him cease to be man, so far it affected his humanity. But as soul and body were united to the divinity of our Saviour, they subsisted by virtue of the second person of the trinity ; whom we affirm in this creed to have been conceived and born, dead and buried, and

* 1 Cor. 15. 3. Rev. 13. 8. 1 Cor. 5. 7.

† Luke 23. 46.

and to have descended into hell ; and therefore, neither his soul nor body could loose their union with him.

It is requisite we should believe this part of the article, because the death of Christ is the most essential part of his office of mediator, as prophet, priest, and king. As a prophet, he died to confirm his doctrine, and ratify the covenant established by his blood. By example and precept, he taught us to value a future state above the present life, and to become obedient to death, with meekness, patience, and humility. He became a *merciful and faithful high priest*, when he made his soul an offering for sin ; and when he redeemed us with his most precious blood, he *reconciled us in the body of his flesh, thro' death**. Thus he became our propitiation, made atonement and full satisfaction for us by his death. And as a king, thro' his death, he destroyed him that had the power of death. *Christ died that he might be Lord both of the dead and living*†. Let every one then establish in his mind this truth, that Christ died in our nature to redeem us, that his soul was separated from the body by violence and tortures, but neither of them was disunited from his divinity ; and that his body remained without life, was *dead*, and afterwards

Buried. Tho' it was not likely, by the manner of our Saviour's death, that he should be buried, because sepulchre and mourning were denied to those who perished on the cross ; yet the providence of God brought it to pass. Even the Jews, in reverence to their law and the approaching sabbath, interceded for it ; nor could Pilate well deny it, having declared he found no fault in him, and condemned him merely to ingratiate himself with the people. And that he might not be laid in the common burial-place with malefactors, *Joseph of Arimathea,*

mathea, an honourable counsellor, besought Pilate to have the body of Jesus ; who commanded it to be delivered to him. Nicodemus also brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, and they wound it in linen cloths, with the spices, as the manner of the Jews was to bury *. The body being before prepared for burial by anointing, it was wrapped in linen rollers, after the usage of the Jews, and his head bound about with a napkin ; his sepulchre was a new vault hewed out of a rock in a garden ; and the corpse being deposited therein, a great stone was rolled to the mouth of it, to preserve the body from being removed.

He descended into hell. There are different opinions concerning the meaning of Christ's descent into hell. Some imagine the descent implies his suffering the torments of the damned ; but this could not be either in a proper or figurative sense. For if these torments consist in remorse of conscience and despair, he who never sinned could have neither ; or if extreme horror and anguish be called the pains of hell, these he endured before his death ; but his descent into hell was after he died. Others think the soul is here to be taken for the body, and hell for the grave. But tho' these words have sometimes this signification in scripture ; yet in this place it must mean something distinct from the burial. There are several other interpretations of these words. But a learned writer observes, that the true meaning of them seems to be this : " That " as his body was laid in the grave, so his soul de- " parted into the state of separate souls ; being re- " signed into the hands of the father who gave it ; " where they who die in the Lord rest from their " labours. In what particular place this was, or " what our Lord did there till the time of his " resurrection ; as it is no where revealed, so " 'tis

* John 19. 39, 40.

" 'tis neither possible, nor of any use for us to
" know."

The third day he rose again from the dead. The promised messiah was to rise from the dead. St. Peter informs us, that *David*, as a prophet, said, that *God would raise up Christ to sit on his throne*; and thus spake of the resurrection of Christ; that his soul was not left in hell, neither did his flesh see corruption*. That Jesus Christ was raised from the dead, we are assured by human, angelical, and divine testimonies. By the women to whom he appeared, who held him by the feet and worshipped him; by his apostles, to whom he shewed himself alive after his passion, by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God†; who were ordained to be witnesses of his resurrection, together with five hundred brethren, of whom he was seen at once; all which concurred in attesting it: And by his enemies, whose confession is of the greatest validity, for even they acknowledged it. The angel who attended and rolled away the stone from the door of the sepulchre, declared that he was risen. The Holy Ghost testified, that Christ was risen, when the spirit was given to the disciples in consequence of his resurrection.

He rose again from the dead. Resurrection is a change, not a new creation; a substantial change, not an accidental alteration. It requires that the soul should be separated, and after separation, that it should be joined to the body, by a vital union, so as the same man lives again. Christ's resurrection was such. He was truly made flesh, he lived a proper life in his human nature, he underwent a real dissolution, his soul was separated, and his body dead; and then the same soul was re-united to the same body, and he lived again. He convinced his disciples that he was not a spirit. *Bebold my hands*

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and

* Acts 2. 30. † Acts 1. 3.

and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And to Thomas he said, reach hither thy finger, and behold my bands, and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless but believing *. He eat before his disciples, he saw, heard and conversed with them.

As to the cause of Christ's resurrection; he himself was the meritorious cause, by his obedience and voluntary sufferings; he was raised in order to be rewarded for them, and his resurrection was the first step towards his exaltation. The principal cause indeed was God. *This Jesus hath God raised up.* It was God the father who raised him from the dead †; but not solely, for Christ also raised himself by that divine power, which he was possessed of with the father. He had power to lay down his life, and to take it again. And Christ raised that very soul and body, to which his divinity was united.

It was necessary some time should pass between the death and resurrection of Christ, that no doubt might arise concerning the reality of his death; and therefore Christ rose the third day, reckoning the day he died, to be one, and the day he rose another. Circumcision is said to be administered after eight days, and yet the day of the birth, and that on which the rite was celebrated, were reckoned two of these. So that he was only three days and three nights in the heart of the earth, figuratively, taking a part for the whole. And as a seventh day was set apart to be a day of rest, and thanksgiving, in imitation of God's resting from the works of creation; and that the sabbath was instituted in remembrance of the deliverance of the children of Israel out of Egypt; so a much greater deliverance being compleated on the first day of the week, it was

* Luke 24. 39. John 20. 27. † Acts 2. 32.
Gal. 1. 1.

was from thence sanctified by the meeting of the apostles for religious duties. Christ appeared to them on the day he rose, when they were providentially assembled ; and again voluntarily, upon the next return of that day *. And on the day of pentecost, which was the first day of the week, they were all *with one accord in one place*, and received the promise of the holy ghost. From hence the first day was distinguished by the name of the Lord's Day.

We should always therefore keep in remembrance Christ's resurrection, for without it our faith is vain. His death manifested his humanity, his resurrection demonstrated his divinity ; and thereby is our hope strengthened and confirmed ; *for we are begotten again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead* †. And we must endeavor to be conformed to his example, that we may be made *sons of the resurrection, in hopes that he who raised up Christ from the dead, will also quicken our mortal bodies, by his spirit that dwelleth in us.* We must resemble him in virtue and holiness, that as Christ was raised from the dead, by the glory of the father, even so we may walk in newness of life, and rise from the death of sin. Every christian therefore ought to believe this most certain and necessary truth ; that the son of God who suffered for our sins, did not long remain in the state of death, but rose the same man the third day after his death ; which being on the first day of the week, that day has been ever since consecrated to a religious observation. And the consideration of his resurrection should make us adhere firmly to the christian religion, because by this we know it came from God.

We should therefore live as his faithful disciples and obedient subjects, diligently keep his commandments, and constantly depend on his promises,

* John 20. 19. 26. Acts 2. 1. † 1 Pet. 1. 3.

he being able to help and save all who trust in him. We must also stand in awe of his threatenings and dread his anger ; for he will be merciful only to them, who serve God, and obey his will.

DISCOURSE XXIII. *Bp. Pearson.*

He ascended into Heaven.

Mark 16. 19.

He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.

TH E person who ascended into heaven, is the same which was spoken of in the former articles ; *our lord Jesus Christ.* It was prefigured by the entrance of the *high-priest* into the *holy place* *, that the messiah was to ascend into heaven. *David* also foretold this ascension ; *thou hast ascended up on high* †. Christ really, and not figuratively, ascended thither, in the same body and soul that he rose with from the dead, of which his disciples were eye-witnesses. *While he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.* He was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight ‡. The angels gave further assurance of it, *This same Jesus which is taken up from you, into heaven, shall so come, in like manner, as ye have seen him go into heaven* †.

It is necessary to believe the ascension of our Lord, for the confirmation of our faith in him, and of

* Heb. 9. 11. † Psal. 68. 18. ‡ Luke. 24. 51.
‡ Act. 1. 10. 11.

of his doctrine ; for we may be sure that he came from the father ; and delivered his will to us, when we find him so highly regarded by God. It is also necessary for the strengthning of our hope ; and we may reasonably hope to follow him, who is gone before in our nature, to prepare a place for us in those mansions where he is, that we may be there also. We should therefore set our affections on heavenly things, that where our treasure is, there our hearts may be also ; and seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God, and have with him, our conversation in heaven.

That the Messiah was to sit at the right hand of God was expressly foretold by *David*. *The lord said unto my lord, sit thou at my right hand, until I make thy enemies thy footstool.* And Christ did actually sit down at the right hand of God. *He was received up into heaven, and sat at the right hand of God.* But the right hand of God is to be understood metaphorically. God is a pure spirit, without parts or hands, but as the right hand among men, is a place of honour and token of kindness ; in allusion thereto. God's right hand denotes his infinite power, glorious majesty, and the perfect happiness of his presence. So that sitting at God's right hand, signifies his being invested with power and dominion : his obtaining honour, glory and majesty ; and his being rewarded with everlasting felicity. Sitteth does not mean, any certain posture of body, but being or continuing, rest and quietnes, also sovereignty and majesty. The immediate effect of his regal power was the subjection of his enemies. *He sat down on the right hand of God, from henceforth expecting, till his enemies be made his footstool* †. The enemies of Christ are either temporal or spiritual ; the former are those, who oppose the doctrine of him and his

apostles ; the latter are sin, satan and death ; which reign in the world, in opposition to him. He is exalted to subdue and destroy them, but not totally to extinguish them.

He destroys sin in cancelling its guilt, by virtue of his death; in restraining its power by his grace; and enabling his servants to escape the pollutions of it by habitual holiness. But the defilement, dominion and guilt of sin, still remain in the disobedient and reprobate ; in whose punishment his justice will be glorified, as well as his mercy in the salvation of his faithful subjects. Christ also destroyeth Satan, *him that had the power of death, that is the devil* *. This he effects by preserving his chosen people from the snares and temptations of their grand adversary, that they may not be taken captive by him, or fall into *the condemnation of the devil*. *The last enemy which shall be destroyed, is death* ‡; and he will save his servants, *from the power of the grave, and redeem them from death* †. This will be by a resurrection of their bodies out of the dust, when death shall be swallowed up in victory, and they shall inherit eternal life. The wicked must also rise with them, to undergo a second and far worse death ; and then will our mediator reign till he hath put *all enemies under his feet*. This will be when his mediation is finished, but even then he will retain the power and honour of king ; for his kingdom shall have no end.

We have considered under the first article, God as *Father*, but the attribute *almighty* was reserved for this place. God's power is infinite, and with him all things are possible. God must be omnipotent, because the power of all creatures is derived from him. *He doth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth* ; and

* Heb. 2. 14. † 1 Cor. 15. 26. † Hosea 13. 14.

and none can stay his hand ; or say unto him, what doſt thou †. But it is no derogation to his infinite power, to ſay he cannot do that, which implies a contradiction ; as for a thing to be, and not to be ; for one body to be in diſtant places at the ſame time ; which would be making two of one, and is a direct contradiction to power : and whatever else implies a contradiction, cannot be the effect of divine omnipotence. To depart from his own rectitude and excellence, would prove the defect, and not the plenitude of power. We have already ſhewed that the ſon is God, and ſhall do the ſame, as to the Holy Ghost ; ſo that we do not pronounce the father to be almighty, exclusive of them, for they are God, by the ſame divinity. It is neceſſary we ſhould believe God to be almighty, because it tends to excite our fear and reverence, our submission and obedience to him. God is terrible, because a great and mighty God ; he is to be feared above all things, being able to *destroy both ſoul and body in hell* †. We ought therefore to humble ourelfes under the mighty hand of God, who is able to ſave and to deſtroy. It is also neceſſary to eſtablish our faith, and firm reliance upon the divine promises ; ſince he *who hath promised is able to perform* *. We may have reaſon to diſtruct mankind in many caſes, but God, the author of truth, cannot deceiver us ; and by his infinite power he can perform whatever he promises. This brings me to conſider the next article,

From thence he ſhall come to judge the quick and the dead. That Christ ſhall come again, and from the highest heavens to which he ascended, is evident from many places of scripture. Our Saviour told his diſciples, *I will come again, and receive you unto myself.* The angels auſſured them, that *this ſame Jesus, which is taken up unto heaven, ſhall ſo come in like manner as ye have ſeen him go into heaven* ; and

† Dan. 4. 35: † Mat. 10. 28. * Rom. 4. 21.

the apostle tells us, *that the lord shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God* †. The end of Christ's coming to judgment, is now to be considered, wherein we shall briefly enquire what assurances we have of a future judgment? who shall be our judge? and how he will judge us?

If we reflect on ourselves, on the frame and disposition of our spirits, we have great reason to think we shall be judged; and this because every man has a conscience to inform him of his duty, and either approving or condemning his actions, by hopes or fears, according to his behaviour, without regard to advantage or inconvenience in this life. If we reflect on God, and his attributes, we must be sure that he judgeth in the earth; that he will do right and execute just judgment in the world to come; because, tho' he now governs the world by his providence, yet universal justice does not appear in all instances: The wicked are frequently happy, and the righteous afflicted; his temporal rewards and punishments are not proportioned to mens virtues or sins; therefore as God is certainly a just judge, there must of necessity be a future judgment, when God will perfectly demonstrate his justice, to the ample satisfaction of every man. From hence even the heathen believed a judgment to come; the apprehension of which made many unrighteous men, as well as *Felix*, tremble. This was a received principle, with all who owned a conscience, or a deity; and is a truth most clearly revealed in God's holy word; *It is appointed unto men, once to die, but after this the judgment**.

We are next to shew who shall be our judge; no doubt the right of judgment belongs to God, whose creatures we are, who hath given us a law, and against whom

† John 14. 3. Acts 1, 11. 1 Thes. 4. 16.

* Heb. 9. 27.

whom we offend. He shall bring every work into judgment, when the revelation of the righteous judgment of God shall be †. But then the execution thereof will be committed to the son. *Tho' God will judge the world, it shall be, by that man whom he hath ordained; for the father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the son; because he is the son of man.* †. He only of the three persons is man, as well as God, and therefore most proper to be our judge, as having the same nature, and a feeling of our infirmities; before whom we may desire to stand as our mediator, because he may qualify the severity of God's judgment, with mildness and equity; when we cannot sustain the presence of an incensed God. This honour is conferred on him, not for our sakes only, but as a reward for his becoming man, and submitting to sufferings; and it will be a demonstration of the divine justice, that he who came into the world to be judged, should at the last day, be made the judge of it; that he who was condemned, and died to absolve us, should himself be entrusted with the power of condemnation and absolution; and that he who refused not to receive the unjust sentence of crucifixion at an earthly tribunal, should pronounce his righteous decrees on a throne of glory. And this our lord intimated to the high-priest and elders of the Jews. *I say unto you, hereafter shall ye see the son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.* *. The same Jesus, the same son of man, shall then reward every man according to his works. To this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be lord of the dead and living. This was represented in several parables and figures. As an husbandman, he is to separate the wheat from the chaff and tares; as a fisherman, he is to save the good fish, and throw the

† Eccles. 12. 14. Rom. 2. 5. † Acts 17. 31.
John. 5. 22, 27. * Mat. 26. 64. Rom. 14. 9.

the bad away ; as a bridegroom, he is to admit the wise, and exclude the foolish virgins. As master of a family, he is to advance and reward the faithful, and punish the unprofitable servants ; as a shepherd, he is to separate the sheep from the goats, placing the one on his right, the other on his left hand.

As to the manner in which we shall be judged, that in general will be, by disposing all persons in soul and body, to their eternal condition. Christ will sit on the throne of his glory, with his apostles, before which all men shall make their personal appearance. *All nations shall be gathered before him. The dead, small and great, shall stand before God †.* And then sentence on the wicked will be, *depart from me ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels ||*; but to the righteous it will be said, *come ye blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.* Thus will he display his majesty on his throne, and exert his authority in convening the world before him ; his knowledge in discovering all the thoughts, words and works of men ; his justice in condemning sinners ; his mercy in absolving believers ; and his power in executing sentence.

The persons whom he will judge, are *the quick and dead.* *He was ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead **. By the dead we are to understand, all who depart this life before Christ's return to judgment ; and by the quick, those who shall be then alive. All generations of men, from the beginning of the world, and those whom he shall find on earth. But *the dead in Christ shall rise first ; then those who are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the lord in the*

† Mat. 25. 32. Rev. 20. 12. || Mat. 25. 41. 34.
* Acts 10. 42.

the air ; for we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed *. The belief of an universal judgment is necessary to support us under those dispensations of God's providence, which in our apprehension seem to be unequal in this life ; for we ought to rest satisfied, that rewards and punishments will, in a future state, be assigned with perfect and unerring justice. It should also lead us to true repentance and amendment of life, as being fully convinced, that God will bring us into judgment ; and it should no less strengthen our hope, encrease our comfort, and establish our assurance of life eternal, knowing that Christ shall be our judge.

Let every christian then be fully convinced, that the son of God shall come from that heaven into which he ascended, and shall summon both the dead and the then living before his judgment-seat, in order to judge them according to their works in the flesh ; when he will deliver the wicked and reprobrates to be tormented with the devil and his angels ; but absolve his elect, and translate them into his heavenly kingdom.

I believe in the Holy Ghost, is the next article of our creed. The word of God sufficiently describes the holy ghost to be a person. We are exhorted not to grieve the spirit of God. *He maketh intercession for us, with groanings that cannot be uttered* †. *The comforter which is the holy ghost, whom the father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things* ; and from numberless other texts, where he is represented, as hearing, receiving, testifying, speaking, reprobating and instructing, which are all personal actions. Intercession, a personal act, is also ascribed to the holy ghost, and that *according to the will of God* ‡ ; for this cannot be interpreted of the father, to whom intercession is made. The father sent him, and

* 1 Thes. 4. 15, 16, 17. 1 Cor. 15. 51. † Ephes. 4. 30. Rom. 8. 26. John. 14. 26. ‡ Rom. 8. 27

and therefore could not be himself. So that the holy ghost is a person distinct from the father, whose power he is ; and also from men in whom he worketh.

The next thing necessary to be proved, is, that the holy ghost is not a created but a divine person. And his divinity will appear from the concession of those, who deny his personality. Such freely grant, that the spirit of God, which is in God, is no created person ; and we maintain that the Holy Ghost is the spirit of God, which is in God ; and therefore if a person, he must be uncreated. Again, there is a sin that may be committed against the Holy Ghost, as shall not be forgiven. This could not be, was he not a person ; and it would not be unpardonable, was he a created person. *All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men ; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men* *. This is a sin against the Holy Ghost, evidently distinct from that against the Father and the Son. If he was not a person, blasphemy against him could not be distinct from that against the Father, whose spirit he is ; and if he was not God, it would not be blasphemy nor criminal in the highest degree and unpardonable : again, he, by whom Christ was conceived of the virgin, is no created person, for by such conception, he was called *the Son of God* †.

From what has been observed, it necessarily follows, that the Holy Ghost is truly and properly God. The different adversaries of the Holy Ghost's divinity, prove this truth against each other. They who deny his personality, maintain that he is *in* God, being the eternal, omnipotent energy of God ; they who deny him to be God, contend that he is a person subsisting, of an intellectual nature :

* Mat. 12. 31. † Luke 1. 35.

ture: From hence may be collected, what both have truly affirmed, that he is a person of eternal and omnipotent power, and therefore God.

The scriptures also expressly assert the godhead of the Holy Ghost; when St. Peter demanded of *Anianas*, why he lyed unto the Holy Ghost, he told him, *he had not lyed unto men, but unto God**. And St. Paul says, *Know ye not, that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost? Ye are the temple of God, and the spirit of God dwelleth in you* †. We are therefore the temple of God, because the spirit of God dwelleth in us. We are separated and dedicated to him in baptism, and are thereby the temple of the living God. But then, as the divine essence can be but one, and as the father is originally the one God, and that the Son is God by eternal generation; it will be necessary to shew how the blessed spirit is God. For we must remember, that he is neither God the Father, nor the son of God. As the scriptures unite them in their nature, so they distinguish them in their persons. *He proceedeth from the Father, and was sent by him*; and therefore cannot be the same person, from whom he proceedeth, and by whom he was sent. He received of the Son and glorified the Son ‡; and he is differently described, from Father and Son. The spirit of God descended like a dove upon our blessed Saviour, *and lo a voice from heaven, saying, this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased* ||; and thro' him, that is Christ, we have access by one spirit, unto the Father. The comforter whom I will send unto you in my name. And he is the third person in the blessed trinity, in necessary order, by which the second is subordinate to the first, and the holy spirit to both; for the godhead was communicated by the Father to the Son, and by Father and Son to the Holy Ghost.

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* Acts 5. 4. † 1 Cor. 6. 19. 3. 16. ‡ John 16.
|| Mat. 3. 16, 17. Ephes. 2. 18.

That the Holy Ghost proceedeth from the Father and the Son, is expressly declared in holy scripture, with respect to the Father, and virtually as to the Son. *He is the spirit of truth which proceedeth from the father* *. The Father hath his nature from none; and the spirit having the same nature, must have it by communication from him. And he is also called *the spirit of Jesus Christ* †; and is sent by the Son as well as the Father. *The comforter whom I will send unto you.* The Father is never sent, because he received his godhead from none; the Father sendeth the Son, because he communicates the godhead to him; the Father and the Son are not sent by the spirit, but the divine nature common to both, was communicated to the spirit by them.

The Greeks absolutely deny the procession from the Son, which yet we ought to receive as a certain truth; tho' inserting it in the creed, without the consent, and against the protestation of the Greek church, was not to be justified, and it ought to be regarded only as an additional explication.

Thus have we shewn, that the Holy Ghost is a proper person, uncreated and truly divine; distinguished from the Father and the Son, tho' the same God; third in order of the blessed Trinity, whose essence was communicated by the Father and the Son, and so proceeding from both.

As to the office of the Holy Spirit, he is to us *the spirit of holiness*; as concurring with the Father and the Son, in the work of our redemption. Our Saviour's office was to redeem us, and the Holy Ghost's is to purify us, that thro' the Son we may have access *by one spirit unto the Father*. And, 1st, he enlightens us with the knowledge of God, either by the outward revelation of his will by the prophets, who spoke and wrote as he moved them, and

* John 15. 26. † Phil. 1. 19,

and the apostles, whom he guided unto all truth ‡ ; or by inward illumination, by which we are disposed to believe and embrace the gospel. He regenerates and renovates men, changes their perverse wills and depraved affections, and inclines them to God and goodness. According to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost ; for we are washed, we are sanctified, we are justified in the name of our lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God *. He governs and strengthens us in the actual performance of our duty ; he worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure ; and we became the sons of God, being led by the spirit of God. He is the spirit of grace and supplication, directs us in our prayers, and maketh intercession for us ¶. 2dly, He assures us of our adoption, creates in us a sense of God's paternal love, and gives us an earnest of our future inheritance. Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, abba, Father. And the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us †. Thus have we shewn the nature of the Holy Ghost, as he is the spirit of God ; and his office, as he is the Holy Spirit.

It is necessary we should believe this article, first, because it is an essential part of the creed, the rule of our faith ; and as we are baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, we must profess our faith in these three. This article of the Holy Ghost, was always included in the shortest confession of faith. 2. That we may desire his excellent gifts and graces, be born of the spirit, and enjoy the communion of the Holy Ghost. That we may earnestly pray for the supply of the spirit of Jesus Christ, and trust in his word, who hath encouraged us to hope,

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‡ 2 Peter 1. 21. John 16. 13. * Titus 3. 5. 1 Cor. 6. 11. ¶ Rom. 8. 14. 26. † Gal. 4. 6. Rom. 5. 5.

our heavenly Father will give the holy spirit to them that ask him *. 3. That we may endeavour to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. That considering ourselves as the temple of the lord, because his spirit dwelleth in us, we may behave worthy of so great a guest, and glorify him in our body and our spirit, which are God's. Lastly, that we may be supported in our infirmities, comforted in discouragements, and abound in peace; and that we may have inward satisfaction in all our misery and distresses; and that like the first disciples, we may be filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost.

Let then every christian believe and profess, that there is a particular and peculiar spirit, really and personally subsisting, but not created, who is truly God; the third person in the blessed Trinity, proceeding from the Father and the Son, who is perfectly holy in himself, and the cause of all holiness in us; who enlightens our understandings, rectifies our wills and affections, renews our natures, and unites us unto Christ; who assures us of our adoption, assists our devotions, and sanctifies our souls and bodies, that we may be accepted of God. Thus are we to believe in the Holy Ghost.

* Luke 11. 13.

D I S-

DISCOURSE XXIV. Ep. Pearson.

The holy catholic church, &c.

Acts 2. 47.

— *The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.*

WE now come to discourse on the article of the apostles creed, contained in these words, *the holy catholic church, the communion of saints.* And we shall consider what the church signifies ; how it is holy ; and how catholic. To be holy and catholic are only affections or qualities of the church. The word church, in its common acceptation, denotes a congregation of men, professing the christian faith. The unity of the church consists in having one head, who is the original and foundation of it ; *We are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone ||:* In having *one lord and one faith* : In owning and administering the same sacraments ; there is *one faith, one baptism, one supper of the lord* : Also in partaking of *one hope, and in mutual charity* ; we are called in *one hope of our calling, and ought to be of one mind, and to keep the unity of the spirit, in the bond of peace.* The church, considered as a body of men professing the faith of Christ, was constituted when the creed was composed, and hath remained ever since, and will continue till the consummation of all things.

The church in itself has no certainty of enduring throughout all ages ; many persons having fallen from

|| Ephes. 2. 20.

from the faith, and turned apostates. But tho' many particular churches have been lost, and the church universal may be destroyed, yet Christ has promised, that he will not permit his church to be extinguished. *The gates of hell shall not prevail against it **.

Holiness and universality are the affections or properties of this church. The church is holy in respect to the vocation of its members, who are under an indispensable obligation to lead holy lives. God hath called us with an holy calling, requiring that every one who nameth the name of Christ, should depart from iniquity ; for without holiness no man shall see the Lord ||. As the church embraceth all who profess the faith, there will be found many hypocrites, and profane persons, who do not truly believe, or will not sincerely obey the gospel. Many are called into the church, but few are chosen. And yet in respect of the good and holy persons therein, who are mixed with the unbelieving and ungodly, the church may be pronounced holy, as the church of *Jerusalem* was called the holy city, even when corrupted in worship and manners.—The other affection or property of the church is catholic, which is usually taken for general or universal ; but when applied to the church, it sometimes signifies a place, as the common or parish church ; when it stands for persons, it is frequently used to distinguish those, who profess the true faith from heretics. And these particular churches were called catholic with a view to their agreement, with the original church, built upon the apostles and prophets. It also expresses the nature of the church, and that it is universal, by admitting all mankind into it, as it is composed of the people of every nation and country. The religion of the Jews was confined to one people ; but in the christian institution,

God

* Mat. 16. 18. || 2 Tim. 1. 9; 2. 19.

God promised to give his Son the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. And the Lord Jesus commanded his apostles to go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature, and repentance and remission of sins, among all nations *. — The church is also catholic, as teaching all necessary and saving truth; as requiring universal obedience from all conditions and degrees of men; as dispensing all grace, necessary to enable us to go on to perfection in all virtue and holiness of life.

It is therefore necessary to believe the holy catholic church, because it is the only way to eternal life. *The lord daily added to the church such as should be saved.* We must believe it to be holy, that we may not hope for happiness therein, without endeavouring to attain that holiness, which was intended by the institution and administrations of it; and we must believe it to be catholic, that we may the more firmly unite ourselves to it; and be careful to embrace that faith, which *was once delivered to the saints.* All Christians then ought to declare, that Christ gathered a church by his apostles, which afterwards mightily increased, and will do so to the end of the world; which is holy in respect of him who was the author, as well as to its ends, institution, and administration; which is really so in respect of its members, both here and hereafter. And this church is not confined to one nation, but admits all mankind, extends to all places, and will be propagated to all ages; wherein all necessary truth is taught, an universal obedience is enjoined, and all graces are dispensed. And thus are we to believe, *the holy catholic church.*

We now proceed to the other part of this article, the *communion of saints.* The word saints is applicable to things, as well as persons; but here it

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signifies

* Psal. 2. 8. Mark 16. 15. Luke 24. 47.

signifies holy persons. They who of mankind are set apart for the peculiar service of God, are holy by this relation. Thus the name of saints is appropriated under the gospel, to them, who entering into the church by baptism, are saints; as being purified from sin, separated from the rest of the world, and enjoying the means of grace. But to be worthy of this title, the genuine effects of grace must be produced in them; and they must be sanctified by faith in Christ; and be holy *in all manner of conversation*, perfecting holiness *in the fear of God*. These are the saints who are the subject of this clause. But then we must distinguish the saints on earth, from the saints in heaven, who lose not the honour of this name, but improve it at their death.

And the saints have communion with God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. *Christ and his Father abide in them by the spirit, which he giveth them.* They have communion with the holy angels, *who are sent forth to minister to them, who shall be heirs of salvation **; and who rejoice over sinners that repent. They have also communion with those of the same nature, both with saints and sinners. And that in outward ordinances; in baptism, in the profession of faith, in hearing God's word, and receiving the lord's supper. But hypocrites do not communicate with them in grace, nor faith that worketh by love; nor do the saints communicate with the ungodly in their sins; they have *no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, nor are partakers of other mens sins* †. The saints have communion among themselves. They enjoy the same ordinances, claim the same promises, are joined in love and affection, and keep the *unity of the spirit in the bond of peace*. They are ingrafted in

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* Heb. 1. 14. Luke 15. 10. † Ephes. 5. 11.
1 Tim. 5. 22.

the same stock, and receive life from the same root. The saints have also a mystical communion with those who are departed hence. All that are in Christ, whether living or dead, are, in respect of their souls, nourished by one spiritual influence, and conjoined by one common bond. But the doctrine of prayers to any saints, or of their merits, are groundless fictions, without any countenance from scripture, or antiquity. It is necessary to believe the communion of saints, thereby to excite us to holiness of life; for if we follow the example of their obedience, we *shall be meet to be partakers of the inheritance, of the saints in light* †; as also to possess us with gratitude and a spirit of thankfulness to God, for such great benefits; and that our hearts may be inflamed with love to our christian brethren while living, and highly to esteem the memory of those who are now with God. So that every one should acknowledge this truth, that they who are sanctified in the church of Christ, by his spirit, have fellowship with God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, who are present with and dwell in them. They also partake of the care and kindness of angels; they live in communion with the church, by enjoying the advantage of the word and sacraments; are intimately joyned and united to all true saints on earth, and which union is not destroyed when they depart hence in the faith and fear of God.

In order to shew what is meant by *forgiveness of sins*, it will be necessary to consider the nature and guilt of sin. Sin in scripture is defined to be *the transgression of the law*. *For where no law is, there is no transgression**. The law of God is the rule of mens actions, and every deviation from that law, is sin; every action, word, or thought, prohibited by the law; every omission of duty required by God,

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† Col. 1. 12.

* 1 John 3. 4.

is sin ; every evil habit, every corrupt inclination of the soul, to neglect what God enjoins, or to do what he forbids, is sin, because contrary to the law of God. Laws in general should be enforced with punishments and rewards, the one to encourage the observation, the other to deter the breach of them. They therefore, who transgress the law, are liable to suffer the punishment due to the justice of God.

Forgiveness of sin, is an act of God's grace, towards the sinner. But the scripture assures us, *that without shedding blood there is no remission* †. That therefore Christ appeared to put away sin, by the sacrifice of himself; in whom we have redemption thro' his blood, the forgiveness of sins. He submitted to the punishment due to sin, to excuse us; he was our propitiation, and by this means he reconciled us to God, who was offended by our sins. *When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God, by the death of his Son* ||. And God who, was before incensed against us, is become gracious, and propitious; and by being restored to his favour, we are reconciled to him, by the death of our Saviour, because he thereby made full satisfaction, to the divine will and justice. *He gave his life a ransom for many; he bought us with a price; for we were not redeemed with corruptible things, but with the precious blood of Christ* *. But tho' God forgave our sins, he did not remit the price of our redemption. For he accepted the atonement which Christ offered, in full satisfaction, by which man is freed from eternal punishment, and restored to God's favour, who is *faithful and just to forgive us our sins.*

Remission of sins was preached in Christ's name, and in order thereto, men were to repent, and be baptized; but this doctrine was never clearly revealed

† Heb. 9. 22. 26. || Rom 5. 10. * Mat. 20. 28.
1 Cor. 6. 20. 1 Pet. 1. 18.

vealed and publicly preached to all nations, until our lord came to save his people from their sins. Forgiveness of sin is conferred in baptism, on all who are duly qualified to receive it. St. Peter exhorted the first converts, to repent and be baptized, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins *. And as we are still subject to sin, in this state of frailty, we are obliged to apply to the throne of grace, by acts of penitence, humble and earnest prayers for the pardon of them upon repentance. For he who faith he bath no sin is a lyar ; he deceives himself, and is full of iniquity when he pretends to innocence. We must therefore constantly strive to be renewed and pardoned by mercy.

It is necessary to believe this article, because of the christian consolation it affords. All have sinned, and the consequence of which guilt must have been the dreadful expectation of everlasting misery, if remission of sins had not been promised us. In this, greater indulgence was shewed to us, than to the fallen angels, who are reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, until the judgment of the great day. For this reason we ought not to despair, but rejoice in the hopes of pardon and forgiveness. It is also necessary, that we may duly estimate God's goodness, and our own happiness. This instance of God's mercy, should make us magnify the divine love, by which our transgressions are forgiven, and our sins are covered ; by which we are delivered from eternal misery, and made capable to inherit eternal life. Such immense kindness deserves all possible returns of gratitude and love. We ought therefore to glorify God in our bodies and spirits, which are God's ; and dedicate ourselves entirely to Christ's service. — Every one then will with certainty and great comfort profess this truth ; that it pleased God, when man became guilty of trans-

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gressing

* Acts 2. 38.

gressing his law, by sin, and was liable to suffer eternal death, to send his only begotten Son to exempt us from the penalty we had incurred, and to ransom us by his blood ; that our lord made full satisfaction for us, and reconciled us to his heavenly father. That he appointed at first baptism, and repentance since, as means for obtaining pardon and forgiveness of our sins.

The next article of our creed, is, *the resurrection of the body*. We have already discoursed of our Saviour's resurrection, and shall now consider the resurrection to come ; who shall be raised, how, and in what manner it shall be performed. The resurrection of the rest of mankind will be different from that of our Saviour's ; because his body did not see corruption ; but the souls of others are separated from their bodies, which are turned into dust, and mixed with other earth. And yet such bodies, however corrupted or dispersed, in distant parts, shall be collected and united to their souls. That such a resurrection is not impossible, but highly probable, and upon christian principles infallibly certain, I will endeavour to prove. And if it is not impossible, no man can absolutely deny it ; if it is highly probable upon natural and moral arguments, we may reasonably expect it ; and if it be certain upon evangelical principles, every christian ought firmly to believe it.

On this subject we are not to examine the works of nature only, but to draw our conclusions from the power of God ; and if we judge by this standard, the rising of the dead is not impossible. For it cannot be too hard for God, because he comprehends by his infinite knowledge, all the sons of men, that have lived from the beginning of the world, or shall live to the end of it. He knoweth whereof they are made ; he seeth from what dust they came, and and to what they shall return. He that made us, discerns

discerns each particle and atom, that belongs to us. *In him we live, move, and have our being, and the very hairs of our head are numbered**. He observes the gradual progress of our generation and growth, and takes notice of our decay and dissolution ; his knowledge enters graves, and tombs, and other receptacles. He is apprized what dust constitutes each body, and what body belongs to each soul ; and can collect, dispose, and join, the scattered ruins of the human fabrick, in its ancient form ; so that it is not impossible to him, thro' deficiency of knowledge. His power is also unlimited. He cannot be resisted, for every part of matter must be applied, as he ordains. Nor is it any contradiction, that the body should be raised ; but rather a rational possibility, that man who was once dust, and becoming dust, should be man again. As every creature was made out of nothing by God, it cannot be reduced to nothing without him. Omnipotence alone could mould an human body out of dust, and breathe into it the breath of life ; and the same power can make it return to bones and flesh. But

The resurrection is not only possible, but highly probable. The soul is immaterial and immortal, but the life of the body is very short. And can we suppose that our spirits should be joined to flesh so soon tending to corruption and dissolution ; unless they were again to reassume it. Besides, as free agents, we are capable of doing good and evil ; and consequently of being rewarded, or punished ; but as man doth not always receive the one or other in this life, it seems expedient, that they should be distributed in the world to come, and that he should be raised up again for this purpose. It is therefore highly probable that there should be a resurrection of the flesh, that every one may receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done,

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whether

* Acts 17. 28. Mat. 10. 30.

whether it be good or bad †. Indeed, the variation of day and night, summer and winter ; the changes in vegetables, the corruption of grain and seeds for the production of plants, herbs, and flowers, bear such a resemblance to a resurrection, as to afford an argument of probability, that man after death, shall revive and live again. But from possibility and probability, let us proceed to assurance and certainty. As we conclude from the power of God, that he can, so from what he hath revealed, it is certain, that he will raise the dead. The prophet assures us, that they who *sleep in the dust of the earth, shall awake ; some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt* ‡. St. Paul appealed to the Pharisees, as to the injustice of his being *called in question, of the hope and resurrection of the dead* ||. And to establish us in this truth, there are several instances of persons raised from the dead, both under the old and new testament. As the widow of Serapta's child ; the son of the Shunamite ; the dead man from Elijah's tomb ; Jairus's daughter from the bed ; the young man * from the bier, and Lazarus from the tomb. Nay, our Lord himself rose from the dead. Christ's resurrection not only proved the possibility of a resurrection, but is a sufficient foundation for our belief of a general resurrection. *Because God both appointed a day, when he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained ; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead ; for in Christ shall all men be made alive* †.

In the future resurrection all men shall rise ; for Christ rose, that he might rule over all, both dead and living. He is to destroy the last enemy death, by a general resurrection ; having the keys of hell and of death.

† 2 Cor. 5. 10. ‡ Dan. 12. 2. || Acts 23. 6. Mark 5. 42. Luke 7. 15. John 11. 44. 1 Cor. 15. 22.

death. As he is the judge of all, therefore all must rise to be judged. Our Saviour assures us, that the soul is not subject to mortality. A resurrection requires the same soul to be united to the same body; and if the same soul were not to be united to the same body, the person would be, not a revived, but another, a new man. But the same flesh which was separated must be united; the tabernacle which was dissolved must be reared again; the temple which was destroyed must be rebuilt. *He that raised up Christ from the dead, shall quicken our mortal corruptible bodies,* which must put on incorruption and immortality*. The very name of resurrection implies this; for nothing but the body dies, and therefore nothing but that can revive and rise again.

This further appears from the places whence the dead are to arise; as from the dust, the sea, and the grave. Wherever the bodies remain after death, from thence the same bodies are to be delivered up. And the judgment that follows the resurrection, evidently proves this. Men are then *to receive the things done in the body* ‡. But it does not agree with the nature of a just retribution, that a man should receive in one body, the things done in another. God will destroy both the body and soul of the wicked in hell; and they who glorify him in body and spirit, shall be glorified in both. Again, in the scripture are examples of a resurrection; the persons that arose had the same bodies. At our Saviour's death, *the graves were opened, and many bodies of saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves* ||. And Christ raised himself with the same body; *behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself.* And he shall also change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his

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glo-

* 1 Cor. 15. 53. ‡ 2 Cor. 5. 10. Mat. 27. 52.
|| Luke 24. 39.

glorious body. But this alteration shall not be of their nature, but of their condition ; not of their substance, but of their qualities.

As to the persons who shall arise, we learn from the gospel, that both just and unjust shall arise ; not some only, but all of them. *There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust. Their is a resurrection of life and damnation. In Christ shall all be made alive. All that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation* *. Therefore all mankind universally must arise from the dead. And this resurrection is future, and not past ; it is at the last day. Christ is to raise up again, all that the Father gives him, at the last day. The dead are to be awakened, at the *last trump*.

Having thus shewn that there shall be hereafter a resurrection of the *same* body that died, we should learn from hence to glorify God's infinite wisdom, in distinctly knowing and comprehending the individual parts of human bodies ; his almighty power in joining and uniting them again into one flesh ; his strict justice in punishing the wicked and rewarding the good ; his love and mercy in promising a future life, after we had incurred the sentence of death. We should also acknowledge the great and powerful work of our redemption by Christ, and ascribe thanks to God, who thro' him hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light. The frequent thought that we shall live again and be judged, must needs deter us from sin, encourage us in goodness, and support us in affliction ; it will also animate us to persevere in our duty, without fainting or reluctance ; it will carry us thro' difficulties and dangers, give ease and relief under all

* Acts 24. 15. John. 5. 28.

all calamities and distresses. Let every one then from hence acknowledge and believe, that God hath appointed all men to rise from death ; and the same body that died, to be raised again and united to the soul, both of the just and unjust, at the last day, when the trump shall sound, and the dead be raised. And thus do we believe the *resurrection of the body*. We come now to consider the last article of the creed.

And the life everlasting. This article represents the state of man after the resurrection ; when the just shall rise to everlasting happiness, and the wicked to everlasting punishment. They who die in their sins, shall arise to judgment and condemnation ; and the scripture assures us, that both their persons and pains shall have no end. *Those shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal* *. If the punishment be everlasting, they must everlastingly subsist to endure it. *They shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.* And the justice of God will perpetually inflict these punishments, which will be in proportion to their demerits. They shall be deprived of the presence and enjoyment of God, and lament their woful condition, without glimpse of hope, or prospect of remedy ; they shall be tormented with the pain of sense, and God's wrath shall abide on them forever.

Everlasting life to the just, not only signifies duration, but also the enjoyment of what God hath promised, and what Christ purchased and prepared for them hereafter ; that is, immediately after death, to be admitted to the blessedness of eternal life, in part with respect to the soul ; for the full and perfect life eternal, will not commence till after the resurrection, and Christ's sentence of absolution. Life implies happiness, and the life of the just is not only a bare natural existence, but a spiritual life, in union

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with

* Mat. 25 46.

with God. This happiness may be considered, with respect to the glorious change of the soul. It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption ; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory ; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power ; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body †. Or it may be considered as to the perfection of the soul in all its faculties, and the improvement of the understanding. *We know in part, but then shall know even as we are known. For we shall see God as he is.* Our will shall be freed from all propensity to sin, and conformed to God's will. It shall be determined to holiness, so as to chuse and embrace the greatest good ; and the affections shall rest satisfied with absolute complacency, in the full enjoyment of it ; without pain or grief, labour or want ; or even a possibility of offending God, or any fear of losing this happiness. For it is called *an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens ; an eternal inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, that fadeth not away.*

The belief of this article, as to the eternal torments of the wicked, is necessary, to deter us from sin, to excite us to holiness and true repentance. He who dieth in his sins without repentance, must be sentenced to everlasting flames. Were we to conceive the punishment of sin to be small or short, we should have but weak motives to virtue, or repentance ; but when we are convinced they are most severe, and endless, it should effectually induce us to avoid and forsake them ; especially, when we consider what it is, *to dwell with everlasting burnings.* As also to create in us, an awful fear of God, who is a consuming fire. That we may reflect on his justice, the fierceness of his anger, and the certainty of his threatening ; so as to fear him, who after

† 1 Cor. 15.

after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell. That we may set a due value on Christ's blood, by which we are ransomed from eternal torments; and be unfeignedly thankful that we have escaped punishment, and obtained thro' him so bountiful a redemption.

The belief of eternal happiness to the just, is necessary to inflame us with an earnest desire of inheriting the kingdom of heaven, and entering into the joy of our lord, and to make us endeavour to attain that holiness, without which no man can see God. As also, that we may take off our esteem and inclinations from the pleasures and allurements of this life; and despise all enjoyments on this side heaven. That we may set our affections on things above, not on things on the earth; that where our treasure is, there our hearts may be also ||. That we may be encouraged to take up the cross, and cheerfully undergo tribulation, for righteousness sake, being satisfied, that the sufferings of this present time, are not worthy to be compared with the glory, which shall be revealed in us ‡.

From what has been said, each christian ought to assent to this as an undoubted truth, that the unjust shall be tormented for ever, for their sins, and continue in being to endure those pains which divine justice will inflict. But that the just shall obtain an eternal inheritance, exempt from death, sin and sorrow, and be secured in the absolute and perpetual enjoyment of all happiness; so as to remain with God and the lamb for evermore, in life everlasting.

¶ Col. 3. 2. Mat. 6. 31. ‡ Rom. 8. 18.

PRAYERS

P R A Y E R S.

A preparatory prayer.

O Lord our God, who permittest us to pray unto thee ; grant that we may approach thy presence, with humble reverence and due attention of mind : Compose our thoughts and raise our affections, that these our prayers and supplications may be acceptable to thee, thro' the merits and intercession of Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

*A family prayer for morning or evening.**Confession of sin and prayer for pardon.*

O Most gracious God, who art from everlasting and world without end. We the work of thy hands, the objects of thy mercy, humble ourselves before thee, O Lord of heaven and earth, in a deep sense of our great vileness and unworthiness, by reason of those many provocations which we have been guilty of against thy divine majesty, in thought, word, and deed. Forgive, O Lord, for thy mercies sake in Jesus Christ, all our innumerable sins and follies, which with shame and sorrow we confess and lament before thee. Pardon, O God, our manifold neglects and careless performances of religious duties, without due affection and attention of mind ; and for not serving thee with that purity of intention and sincerity of heart, with that fervency of spirit and zeal for thy glory, with that care and constancy which we ought to have done. Forgive, O God, all our sins of ignorance and infirmity ; all wicked thoughts, irregular appetites and passions, and all our sins of omission, which are more than we can number ; but more especially all our wilful transgressions of thy righteous laws,

and

and every evil practice whatsoever. These our offences, and many more which we cannot remember, are all in thy sight, O Lord, and our most secret sins are not hid from thee. When we reflect on the errors of our past lives, and consider what we deserve at thy hands, our flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and we dread thy judgments. Make us therefore, O Lord, deeply sensible of the great danger of sin, and create in us an unfeigned sorrow for having offended thee; and do thou pardon and spare us, thro' the merits of our blessed saviour and redeemer. *Amen.*

A prayer for grace.

AND that we may serve thee better for the future, we humbly implore the continual presence, direction, and assistance of thy Holy Spirit, to enable us daily to improve in virtue and piety, and to reform whatever is amiss in the temper and disposition of our minds, or in any past actions of our lives. Grant us wisdom to know our duty, and a sincere intention to practise it. Dispose and help us to perform thy will with delight and cheerfulness, and patiently submit to it in all things. Endue us, O Lord, with true love and fear of thee, and a prudent zeal for thy glory. Encrease in us charity, meekness, and humility; truth, justice, and fidelity; and enable us to bear every condition with constancy and equality of mind. Assist us, O Lord, with thy grace, to govern all our appetites and passions, by temperance and purity. Make us to consider we are ever in thy presence, that we may not sin against thee. Purify our souls from all evil thoughts, wicked intentions and designs. Keep us from pride and vanity, malice and envy; and let us patiently bear reproaches and injuries, and be always ready to forgive and return good for evil. Grant that we may use our best

endeavours to promote thy honour and glory, the happiness and welfare of all men, and our own eternal salvation. Supply us with whatever is necessary and convenient for us. Keep us from all dangers and sad accidents; and let thy blessing attend all our honest designs and undertakings. Prepare us, O Lord, for our latter end. Enable us to perform the last act of our lives, with decency and constancy of mind; that neither our disease nor weakness may break the firmness of our spirits, so as to amaze us with fear or betray us with peevishness; but let us, in that serious hour, wait with patience, and resign ourselves to thy will, in full expectation of thy coming; grant this, thro' Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

A prayer of intercession.

AND we humbly beseech thee, O God, to shew pity and compassion to all mankind. Bless and preserve thy whole church; remove out of it all impiety and profaneness, all errors and corruptions, divisions and dissentions; and restore to it piety and virtue, peace and charity. Let not those who profess the same faith, any longer persecute and destroy one another, but do thou incline them to live as brethren and heirs of the same common salvation. Take into thy care and protection our most gracious king; give him wisdom from above, that he may rule in thy fear, to thy glory, and for the welfare of his people. Endue all the governors and pastors of thy church, with the spirit of true religion and goodness; that they may prudently govern, and diligently instruct all those who are under their care. Be merciful, O God, to all who are in any affliction or distress; who labour under poverty, persecution, or captivity; under bodily pains, diseases, or temptation and trouble.

trouble of mind. Be thou pleased to support and deliver them, according to thy great mercy. And vouchsafe to all of us, whatever thy infinite wisdom knows to be most needful and expedient, both for our souls and bodies, thro' Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

A thanksgiving prayer.

AND now, O Lord, we desire to bless and praise thee, the great creator, preserver and governor of all things; our Saviour, deliverer, and continual benefactor. We acknowledge, admire, and adore thy infinite excellencies, and perfections; and render our most humble thanks to thee, for innumerable blessings and favours conferred on us, thy unworthy creatures; for our being, reason, and understanding; for thy continual care and watchful providence over us, from the beginning of our lives to this moment; and for thy unwearied patience towards us, after frequent and very heinous provocations; more especially we praise and magnify thy great name, for thy tender mercy and compassion to us and all mankind, in sending thy dearly beloved Son into the world, to redeem us from sin and misery, and by suffering in our nature, and dying in our stead, to purchase for us eternal life. We bless thee for the light of thy glorious gospel, for any knowledge and sense we have of our duty towards thee; for delivering us from many dangers, and supporting us under temptations. For the direction and assistance of thy Holy Spirit; for restraining us by thy grace, and reclaiming us from sin and vanity; and for enabling us in any measure to love, fear, and obey thee. For these and all other thy mercies and blessings which are more than we can number; we render unto

unto thee, all possible praise and thanks, thro' Jesus Christ, our Lord. *Amen.* *

Another family prayer for morning or evening.

An act of adoration and thanksgiving.

O Almighty and eternal Lord God; we thy sinful creatures humble ourselves before thee, to acknowledge thy sovereign dominion over us and all creatures; to praise and magnify thy eternal power, wisdom, and goodness, which are every where apparent; and to render thee our unfeigned thanks for the innumerable benefits, which thou hast most bountifully bestowed upon us. We praise thee, O Lord, for thy infinite love towards us, in and thro' Christ Jesus, by whom thou invitest the return of sinners, and directest them in the way to everlasting life. We thank thee, O God, for his mysterious incarnation and birth; his holy doctrine and exemplary life; his bitter agony, meritorious death and passion; for his victorious resurrection from the dead, ascension into heaven, and continual intercession for us at thy right hand. Blessed be thy name, for our being educated in thy true religion, and for all the means and opportunities of knowing that love of thine, which far exceeds our deserts. We acknowledge, O God, that it was thy love to the sinful sons of men, that moved thee to overlook such innumerable offences, whereby they had provoked thy severest displeasure. O the greatness of thy love, to honour our immortal nature with so high a glory, as to make us thy adopted children, and heirs with Christ Jesus. Awaken in our minds we pray thee, frequent and serious reflections upon these great and distinguishing favours towards us; and continually preserve in us such a powerful sense of thy

* Here to come in the collect for the lord's day, and after it the concluding prayer.

thy presence with us, and the love of our Lord and Saviour for us, that we may fear and reverence thee ; study to approve ourselves to thee, and to be loved by thee, and esteem it our greatest happiness and perfection to resemble thee in wisdom and goodness. *Amen.*

Confession and petition for pardon and grace.

BUT, O God, with confusion of face we confess our great forgetfulness of these things, and ingratitude to thee, to whom we are obliged for our creation, redemption, and whatever we enjoy in this world, or can expect in the next. Our only hope of pardon is in thy compassion, thro' the merits and intercession of our blessed Saviour. And we most humbly implore thy tender mercies in the forgiveness of all our sins, whereby we have offended either in thought, word, or deed, against thy just and holy laws ; which it is our duty, interest, and happiness, to be governed by. Pardon, we beseech thee, our manifold neglects and omissions of our duty ; but more especially all our wilful transgressions of what nature and kind soever. We utterly renounce, and resolve to forsake whatever is contrary to thy holy will, and entirely devote ourselves to thee and thy service. O gracious Father, be pleased to accept of our resolutions to serve thee better for *the* future. And we most solemnly dedicate all the powers of our souls and bodies to thy service, earnestly begging of thee, that all the thoughts and designs of our minds, and all the actions of our lives may be pure, holy, and inoffensive. Assist us with thy grace, that we may in some degree resemble thee in righteousness, mercy, and truth. Preserve in our souls a powerful and lively sense of thee, an ardent love and holy care to please and obey thee in all things. Grant that the same mind and spirit may be in us, which was in Christ Jesus ; the spirit of wisdom and under-

understanding, of meekness and humility, of purity and charity. And enable us to perform thy will, O God, with the like cheerfulness and zeal, constancy and perseverance that he did; who went about doing good both to the souls and bodies of men. Write thy law on *our* hearts, and implant thy fear in *our* minds, that *we* may not offend thee. Make it *our* delight to praise thee, to remember thy loving-kindness, and to meditate on thy gracious promises. Let us at no time be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, nor yet oppress with worldly cares. Give us grace to possess our bodies in sanctification and honour, to love our neighbour as ourselves, to live peaceably with all men, and be content with what we have. Teach us, we beseech thee, seriously to consider, that we came into this world, not to do our own wills, but his that sent us; and that we are no farther christians, than as we diligently perform thy will, O God, and sincerely obey the gospel, we profess to believe. Affect us deeply with the important design for which we live; that by considering the present time, as a state of trial and probation, we may not expect true satisfaction, in this world. Make us highly sensible of the frailty, shortness, and uncertainty of this life, and the importance of that which is immortal. O let us be careful so to live, as that we may die the death of the righteous, and our last end be like his. Let no appetite of pleasure, no desire of false glory, prevail on us to depart from our duty; that by persevering in a constant course of virtue and piety, we may, at our departure hence, have a solid and sure hope of coming to that high and holy place, which thou hast prepared for those who love and serve thee. And as to things temporal, we pray thee to give success to our honest designs, and to prosper the work of our hands, that *we* may enjoy all things necessary and conve-

convenient for us, during our pilgrimage here on earth. This we beg thro' the merits of Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

A prayer of intercession.

WE also beg leave to enlarge our petitions for the whole race of mankind ; grant that all the world may know thee to be the Lord God, and believe in thy Son, the blessed Jesus. Continue thy mercies to these nations to which we belong ; reform and amend all our lives. Preserve thy true religion throughout the world. Let all christians believe rightly, and live agreeably to their holy profession. Bleis our most gracious sovereign ; protect his person, and make his government easy to himself, and happy to his people. Avert from us the judgments we deserve or fear ; continue to us the blessings and comforts, the helps and advantages for our souls and bodies, which thro' thy favour we do enjoy. Bleis our friends and relations, reward our benefactors, and forgive our enemies. Have pity and compassion on all who are in affliction ; sanctify thy fatherly corrections to them ; support and deliver them from all the pressures they lie under. Convert the wicked ; give a check to all profaneness, vice, and impiety, that presumptuous sinners may be ashamed, and all iniquity cease amongst men. Let us all remember and provide for the time of trouble, sickness, and death ; when all worldly succours will fail, and the greatest powers on earth cannot help us ; all this we beg thro' Jesus Christ our Lord, *Amen.**

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* Here comes in the collect for the Lord's day, and the concluding prayer.

*A prayer for morning or evening in private.**Confession of sin, and prayer for pardon.*

O Great and glorious Lord God ! I approach thy presence with shame and confusion, when I consider the punishment I justly deserve for my many and great sins. I have offended thee in my inclinations and desires, in my words and actions, in my childhood, my youth, and riper years ; and this with thought and deliberation, contrary to the checks and restraints of my own conscience. I have not been sufficiently watchful over myself, to keep those vows and resolutions I have made against sin, but have too often returned again to my former evil ways. I have omitted and neglected to do those good things which thou hast commanded, and have done many evil things which thou hast forbidden. *Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up ; they are more than the hairs of my head, therefore my heart faileth me,* and I have no hope but in thy mercy, thro' Jesus Christ our Saviour and redeemer. O gracious God ! give me a just and deep sense of all my sins. Make me in a religious manner truly sorrowful and penitent for them, and grant me the full and free pardon of all I have done amiss, in the whole course of my life, thro' the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Petition for grace.

GIVE me grace, that I may carefully watch over my thoughts and inclinations, words and actions, and make them all conformable to thy holy will and laws. *Work in me both to will and to do, of thy good pleasure.* Perfect the work of true sanctification in me ; and create in me a detestation and abhorrence of whatever is contrary to thy heavenly will. Make me deeply sensible of the great and sinful

sinful neglect, of which I have been guilty, in carrying on the necessary work of holiness of life. O grant me the full pardon of all that is past, and make me careful and diligent, not again to offend thee. *Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy holy spirit from me; restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free spirit.* This I humbly beg thro' Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

A Thanksgiving.

AND I render unto thee, O God, all honour and glory, praise and thanksgiving, for thine infinite excellencies and perfections. For thy mercy and goodness to all thy creatures, for our creation, and the rational souls which thou hast given us, endowed with so many noble faculties. For our food and raiment, for the necessaries, conveniences and comforts of life, which thou hast so bountifully bestowed on us; for our preservation from many dangers, which we have escaped by thy kind and watchful providence over us. But above all for the knowledge of thee and of thy holy will and laws which thou hast graciously given us, partly by our reason, but more fully by that revelation made in thy holy word, for the quieting of our minds and consciences here, and guiding us to a future eternal happiness. For the sending thy beloved Son into this world, to take our nature upon him, to endure the most bitter sufferings for us, to redeem us from the punishment and slavery of sin, and to bring us to life immortal. For the gifts and graces of thy holy spirit, to assist us, in the way of salvation. And for all the means of grace, and the well grounded hope of eternal life, which thou hast vouchsafed to us, by our blessed Lord and Saviour. For

For these and all other thy blessings and mercies to me, and all mankind, I humbly offer unto thee my sincere praises and thanksgivings, beseeching thee to affect the hearts of me and all men, with such a due sense of them, that we may walk before thee, in holiness and righteousness all our days, thro' Jesus Christ our Lord.

Prayers of intercession.

I Also offer up my prayers and supplications to thee, O God, not for my self only, but for all mankind ; high and low, rich and poor, friends, strangers and enemies. Let the religion of Christ be known throughout the world ; and bring all men to the true faith in thee and thy son. Grant that all who profess thy gospel, may avoid all needless disputes and controversies, and agree in all things necessary to eternal salvation. And may we all live in the true fear of thee, in sincere love and charity towards one another ; and in the conscientious practice of sobriety, temperance, chastity, humility, and all other christian virtues and graces. *That our light may so shine before men, that others seeing our good works, may glorify thee our heavenly Father.* Deliver thy whole church from persecution and oppression ; that all who are truly peaceable and conscientious, may have liberty to serve thee, with a pure conscience. Bless all kings, princes and magistrates ; especially those who are of the true faith and religion ; in particular our sovereign lord king George, and all who are in authority under him. Incline all their hearts impartially to administer justice, duly tempered with equity, for the good of mankind ; and make them sincerely to promote peace, and virtue, true religion and piety, throughout the world. Bless all the bishops, and pastors of the christian church ; make them holy and

exemplary in their lives, pure in their doctrine, faithful and diligent in the discharge of their several duties ; that thy grace co-operating with them, true and pure religion, both as to faith and practice, may be rooted in the hearts of all those who profess the name of *Christ*. Sanctify the several afflictions of all who labour under poverty, pain, sickness, or any other calamity ; give them patience to bear them, and in thy good time, a happy deliverance from all their sufferings. Pardon and forgive our enemies, and unite our hearts in love and charity.

Petition for ourselves.

The same blessings both spiritual and temporal which we have prayed for in the behalf of others, be pleased, O God, to shower down upon me, my relations and friends, according to our circumstances and capacities. Make us truly penitent for all our sins, thankful for all thy mercies, diligent in the performance of our several duties, and careful to avoid all sin and wickedness ; that we may be willing to die, whenever thou pleasest to remove us hence. Fit and prepare us by true faith, sincere repentance, and a holy life, for a happy death and blessed eternity. And, if consistent with thy blessed will, grant us an easy passage out of this world, without pain or torment of body, in peace and quietness of mind and conscience, and in true reconciliation with thee. And as long as thou art pleased to continue us in this life, grant us health and strength, a right understanding, food and raiment, and all the necessaries of life, in such measure as thou knowest to be best for us. But above all, grant us thy grace, that we may live virtuously, and religiously here, and be eternally happy with thee hereafter. And whatsoever else thou knowest to be most fit and convenient for us and all mankind.

kind, we humbly beg, in the name and thro' the mediation of thy son, our Lord Jesus Christ,
Amen †.

A shorter family prayer, for morning or night.

Almighty and everlasting God, the governor of all things in heaven and earth, we thy unworthy servants, beseech thee in mercy to look down upon us, who acknowledge it is of thy great goodness that we are now alive, and have this opportunity to implore thy pardon and forgiveness. We confess, O God, that the time thou hast given us, to prepare for an happy eternity, has been greatly neglected and misimproved by us, and trifled away in the pursuit of pleasure and momentary vanities. We have placed our affections too much on earthly and temporary enjoyments, and not enough regarded thy design in sending us into this world; which was to serve and please thee, our great creator and most gracious benefactor; and not to disobey thy holy laws, and dishonour thy great name.

We have not duly considered the strict account we must shortly give, of all our actions, before thy exact and impartial tribunal, when we shall depart hence, and be no more seen. We have many ways offended thee, in our thoughts, words, and actions. O merciful father do not thou condemn us, but pardon and spare us, thro' the meritorious sufferings of our blessed redeemer.

And because we are in this world, surrounded with many temptations, enable us, we beseech thee, by thy holy spirit, to subdue and govern our unruly passions, to be careful and diligent in resisting the least motions and inclinations to sin, and to abstain from all appearances of evil. Possess our minds with

† Then add the collect for the sabbath-day, and the concluding prayer.

with a true sense of the great importance and necessity of working out our salvation, of the short time allotted us for that purpose, of the glorious rewards promised, and the dreadful punishment threatened ; that we may earnestly strive to obtain everlasting life, and escape the wrath to come. Help us to love thee more entirely, to serve thee more faithfully, to trust in thee more fully, than we have hitherto done ; that in a dying hour, when all things here will fail us, and we are passing into an eternal state, our souls may be filled with the comfortable reflection, of having rightly discharged our duty towards thee, and all men. Grant us grace, patiently to bear all our afflictions, cheerfully to enjoy all thy blessings, and thankfully to praise thee for them. Make us so wisely to improve all thy providences both of mercy and severity, that in our lowest adversity, we may not be dejected with anxiety and unbelief ; nor in our highest prosperity be lifted up with pride, and forget thee our God, thro' whom alone we live, move, and have our being.

Bless thy whole church, reform whatever is amiss in the belief, or lives of christians ; be gracious to these nations, compose our differences, unite us to one another, reconcile us to thy divine majesty, and defend us from our enemies. Make us deeply sensible of the danger we are in, by our manifold sins and impieties ; and grant that we may all, from the highest to the lowest, turn unto thee by a sincere and hearty repentance, that we may be pardoned and spared. Bless and preserve our relations, friends and benefactors ; forgive our enemies ; pity all who are afflicted, comfort them that mourn, support the sick and weak, have compassion upon all dying persons, and fit them for eternal happiness.

We also laud and magnify thy great name, for the many mercies and blessings thou hast conferred on us thy unworthy servants. For our food and

raiment, for that health and strength we do enjoy, and for our preservation and deliverance, from innumerable dangers. But above all, we praise and thank thee, O God, for thy infinite love, in sending thy Son Jesus Christ, to redeem us and all mankind. And let that good providence which hath hitherto preserved and defended us, still keep and protect us, from the dangers and misfortunes, the sins and offences, the snares and temptations, into which we are liable to fall. Bless all our honest designs, and just undertakings, shorten our troubles, and support us under them ; and by a faithful discharge of our duty, bring us every day nearer to the glorious reward of eternal life, thro' the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

A concluding prayer for the morning.

O Merciful God, as thy kind providence hath graciously preserved and defended us, from all dangers and sad accidents of the past night, for which we most heartily thank thy divine majesty ; so we humbly beseech thee, to take us under thy protection this day ; bless and keep us from the dangers and misfortunes, the sins and offences, the evils and temptations, into which we are liable to fall. Be with us in our going out and coming in ; give success to our affairs ; and bring us hereafter to eternal happiness, thro' Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

A concluding prayer for the evening.

O Lord our heavenly Father, by whose gracious providence both day and night are governed ; we who have been preserved by thy infinite goodness the day past ; for which we offer thee our thanks

thanks and praise ; do humbly implore thy merciful protection over us this night. Defend us from all sad and evil accidents ; grant us quiet and refreshing rest, and bring us in health and safety, to the light of another day. All which we humbly beg, thro' Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

A collect to be added to our prayers on Sunday morning.

O God, who art greatly to be feared in the assembly of thy saints, and to be had in reverence, by all who approach thee. Grant that we may worship thee this day in spirit and in truth. Give a blessing to thy word that shall be read and expounded, and to the prayers offered up to thy divine majesty ; unite and compose our thoughts in thy presence, that we may attend upon thee after an acceptable manner. O let us improve this day to the best advantages for our souls ; and may the religious observance of it, tend to prepare us for the glorious appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we shall keep an eternal sabbath with him in the kingdom of heaven.

Either of these prayers may be used by a family, or private person, only changing the singular or plural number.

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